

Consultation on the Make Listening Safe Initiative

1-3 July 2025 ITU Headquarters, Geneva









Opening Session

Guy Fones, Director a.i. Department for Noncommunicable Diseases, Rehabilitation and Disability, WHO

Bilel Jamoussi Deputy to the TSB Director, ITU







Ten Years of Make Listening Safe Progress, Challenges & Opportunities

Shelly Chadha Simao Campos



Make listening safe: 2015-2025-2035

Dr Shelly Chadha
Technical lead,
Ear and hearing care





l have a dream...





Where all people young and old, respect their hearing











Where all devices used for listening, playing games and experiencing VR and beyond provide and promote safe listening features and messages.





















1





. The stakes are high













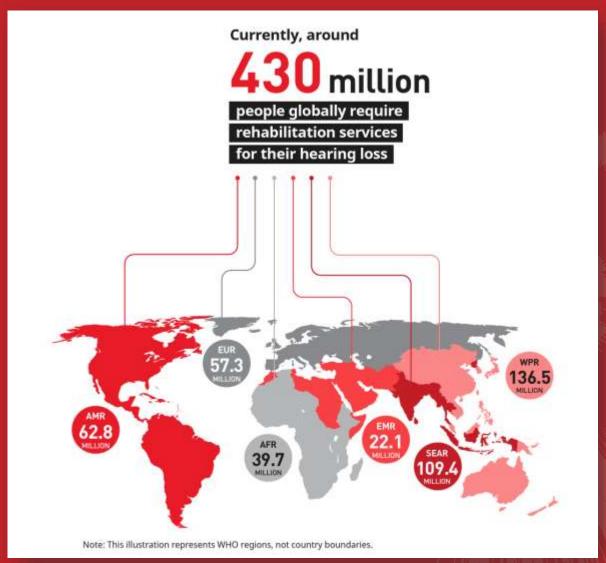
> 1 BILLION

young people are at risk of permanent hearing loss due to recreational listening at loud volumes

















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- . The stakes are high
- There was little awareness of the risks and the means of mitigating it







Make Listening Safe

Make the invisible visible!





WHO-ITU JOIN HANDS TO MAKE LISTENING SAFE



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WHO releases new standard to tackle rising threat of hearing loss



1 billion + young people potentially at risk of hearing loss from loud music





To hear for life, listen with care!



Hearing loss due to loud sounds can be prevented









Make Listening Safe





AROUND THE WORLD

Bryan Adams and Malala speak out for World Hearing Day





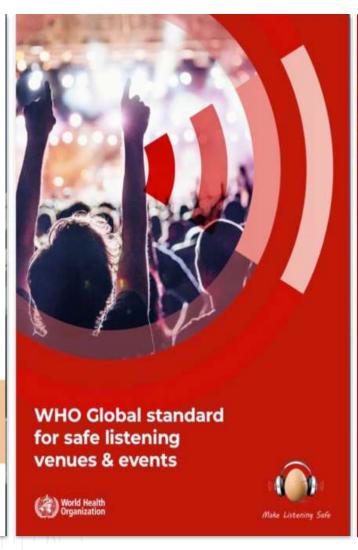






Safe Listening
Devices and Systems

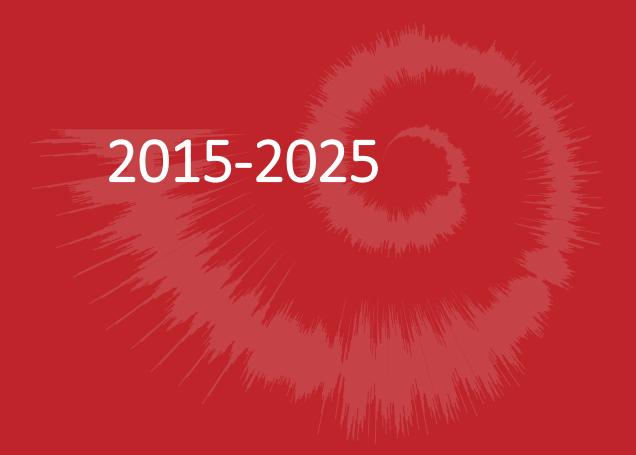
A WHO-ITU standard











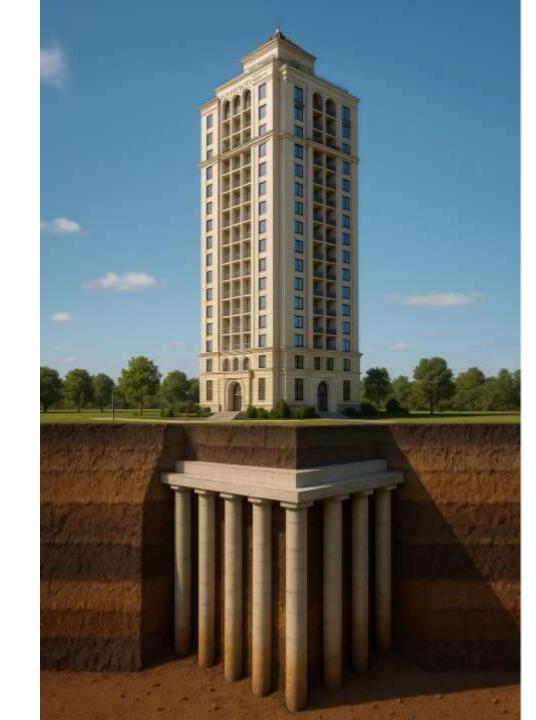














COLLABORATION AND SHARED VISION



- Professional
- Industry
- Civil society
- Academia
- Target group
- Governments
- UN agencies







Make Listening Safe

To ensure that people of all ages can enjoy listening without risk to their hearing



Make Listening Safe

Thank you

mls@who.int





Ten Years of Make Listening Safe Progress, Challenges & Opportunities

Shelly Chadha Simao Campos



ITU and WHO collaboration on safe listening standards: Going 10 years strong!



(In case you did not know...)



The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs)



Who makes ITU standards?

A sample of ITU's private sector members

























































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10 years: How we got here

- Europe: Existing hard-threshold standard; Evolving sound-dose standard
- Big void elsewhere
- No guidance on communication to device users

Consultation meeting	•October 2015	
Gap analysis	•Early 2016	
Work on umbrella specification	•2Q 2016	
Drafting completed	•July 2018 (C) Aug. 2018 (A)	
ITU edition launched	•Nov. 2018 (P)	 ITU edition published in Nov. 2018 Translation into the six UN languages
WHO edition launched	•Feb. 2019 (P)	
Implementation toolkit launched	•Feb. 2019	
Conformance testing specification completed	• Apr. 2021	
2 nd edition of H.870	• Mar. 2023	
Updated conformance testing specification & safe listening in venues as ITU publication	•Apr. 2024	
1 st edition of H.872: video gameplay & esports	•Oct. 2024 (ITU version), May 2025 (WHO ve	ersion)

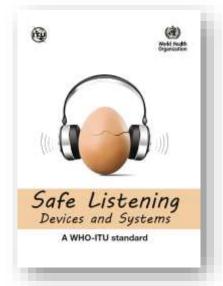
What's in WHO / ITU H.870?

- Evidence-based guidance
- Major tenet: exposure to occupational noise framework also holds for music
- Builds upon sound dose management standards
 - IEC 62368-1:2018 and EN 50332-3:2017
- Overview of concepts (a bridge across medical and technology specialties)
- Two operation modes
 - Mode 1 (adults): reference exposure is **1.6 Pa²h per 7 days**
 - Mode 2: (sensitive users, e.g. children): reference exposure is **0.51 Pa²h per 7 days**
 - NOTE Reference exposures are derived from **80 dBA SPL** (Mode 1) and **75 dBA SPL** (Mode 2) for 40 hours per week (which in turn is derived from **8 hours per day, 5 days/week**)
- Volume limiting whence dosage exceeded until user acknowledges cues
- Guidance on how to communicate with users of personal audio devices
 - Keep record of usage information and provide personalized recommendations & cues
 - General information (how to listen safely, risk awareness, etc.)
 - General usage reporting (average levels, how much listening in a day & week)
 - Types of warnings when user reaches 100% of weekly allowance
- Gives further guidance: ambient noise control (e.g., noise cancelling) & parental control

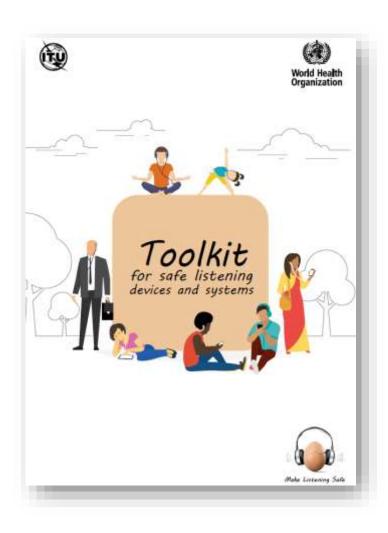
What have we gotten?

- A WHO and ITU international standard
 - It has the same level as ISO and IEC de juris standards
- ITU publication: "Recommendation ITU-T H.870, Guidelines for safe listening devices/systems" WHO publication: "Safe listening devices and systems"
 - Both are **FREE** publications
- Why two publications? What's the difference?





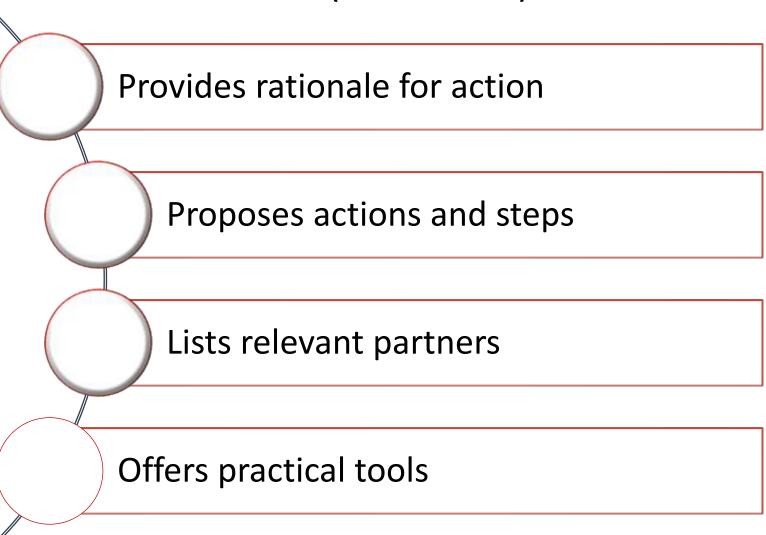
What else? And where from now?



- WHO & ITU Toolkit
 - What can different stakeholders do (governments, industry, civil society)
 - Devices (H.870): issued in 2019
 - Videogaming & esports
- Advocacy, awareness, adoption
- Standardization front:
 - Programme for compliance testing of H.870 implementations
 - Future improvements to H.870, H.872, ...
 - Headphone sensitivity registry

WHO & ITU Toolkit for H.870 (devices)

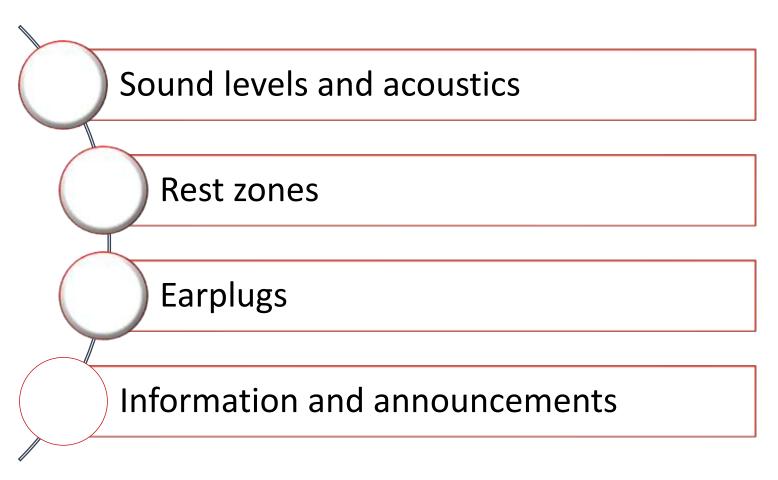
Practical guide on implementation and follow-up of the H.870 global standard for safe listening devices



Guidance for safe listening in venues



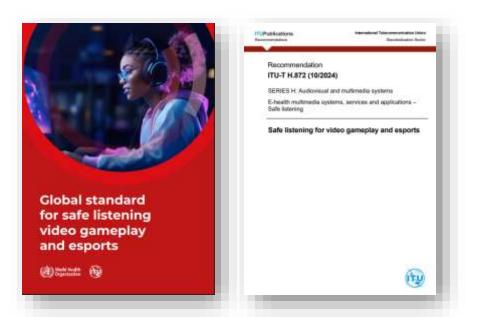
Recommendations regarding concert venues; discos; bars



Currently: Published by both <u>WHO</u> and ITU (Technical Paper <u>HTSP-SLD-Venue</u>)

Guidance for safe listening in video gameplay and esports

H.872: ITU (2024) & WHO (2025)



Sound exposure limits (built upon H.870)

Monitoring and alerts

Behavioral guidance

User-centric controls

Expected device and software features

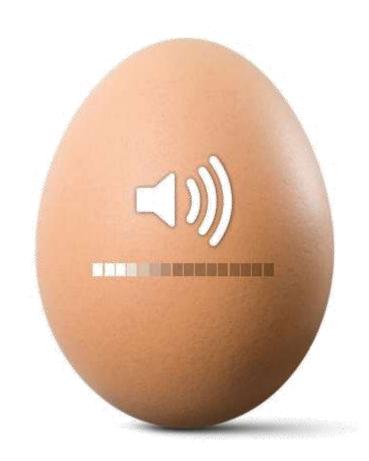
Personal sound amplification products

- Wearable electronic products or application on a wearable smart device (e.g. a mobile phone) that is **not** intended to compensate for impaired hearing, but rather is intended for non-hearing impaired consumers to amplify sounds in the environment for a number of reasons, e.g.
 - Recreational activities
 - Selective hearing in noisy environments
- **PSAP**s are off-the-shelf, non-regulated devices with a varying range of features
- Currently there are no international standards on the safety of PSAPs
 - Levels, exposure
- ITU-T's Recommendation <u>F.781</u> "Safety requirements for personal sound amplifiers" is the first technical standard to address this issue, approved in July 2019
 - Project leaders: European Federation of the Hard of Hearing (EFHOH), European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals (AEA).
- Based on the same principle as ITU / WHO H.870
- Conformance testing specification now available: <u>FSTP-CONF-F780.1</u> (2022)

Final word ... Advocacy

Be a safe listening advocate!

- Advocate for implementation of the H.870 family of standards
 - Governments
 - Industry
 - Civil society
- Raise awareness for safe listening



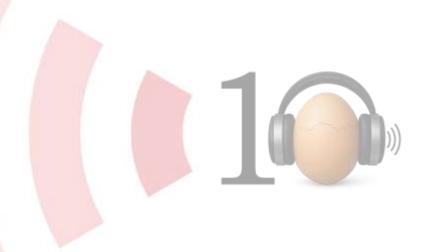
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Keep the volume down!

Make Listening Safe

Introductions

ΑII









How many consultations on the Make Listening Safe initiative have you attended?

Which is the first year you got involved with Make Listening Safe?









Making Listening Safe across the world: snapshots



Panel discussion on success stories









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Raphael Elmiger

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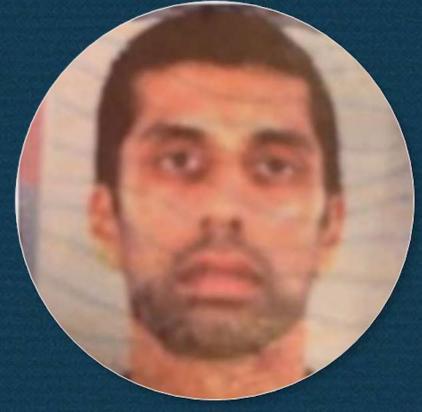
Brian Schmidt

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Tatjana Sachse

TALK SHOW, Rand



Raj Desai

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Jörn Nettingsmeier

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Consultation on the Make Listening Safe Initiative 2025 Panel session on success stories



Raphael Elmiger



Brian Schmidt



Tatjana Sachse



Raj Desai



Jörn Nettingsmeier

Reflections









Lunch break

Resume at 2:00 pm









Looking ahead: 2035 ambitions

Shelly Chadha

















Make Listening Safe





.... in 2035





World Health Organization

< 80 dBA/40 hours/week













is the reference for all standards and guidelines related to #safelistening in 2035

WHO #safelistening smart-school



is introduced in all schoolprograms in 2035

#safelistening "Grammies", "Oscars", "Golden Palm" ...







are introduced in all award ceremonies in 2035





.... in 2035





The #safelistening venues standard

WHO Global standard for safe listening venues & events





is part of most regulations or are voluntarily implemented in 2035

The #safelistening video gameplay and esports standard

Safe listening for video gameplay and esports







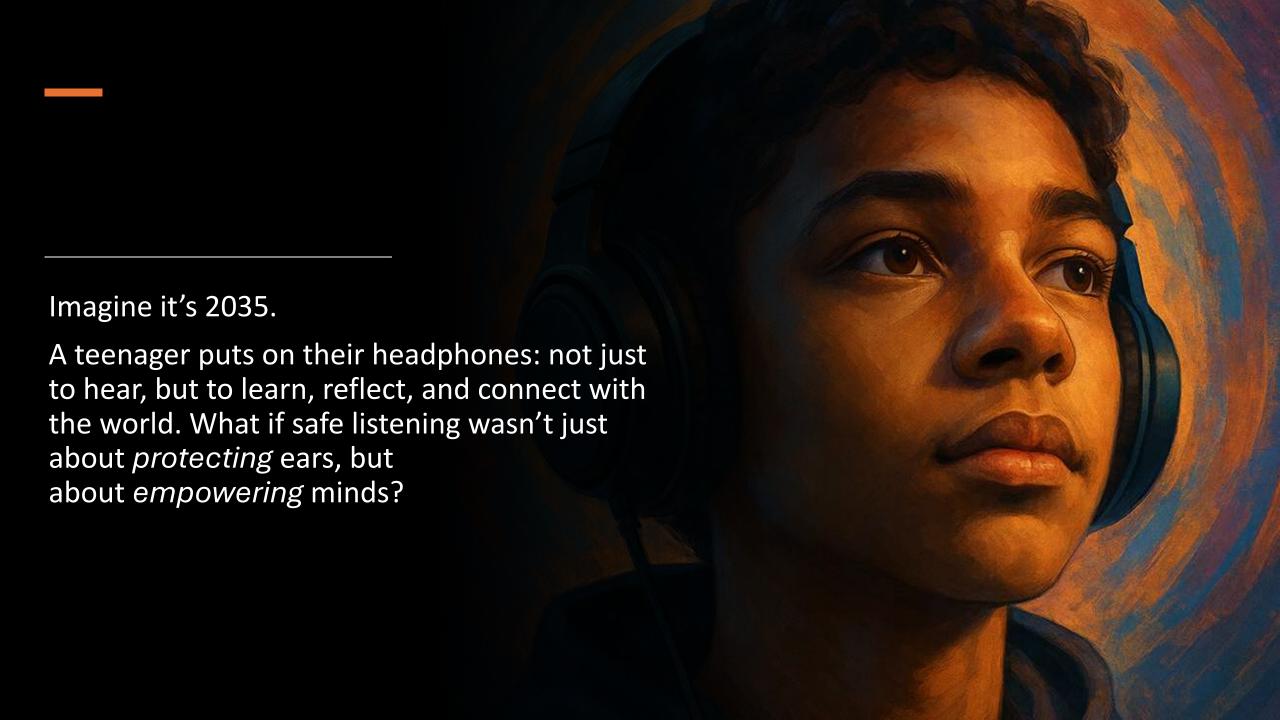
Make Listaning Safe

is implemented in all gameconsoles, devices and titles 2035 The #safelistening videos by Andreas Thulin

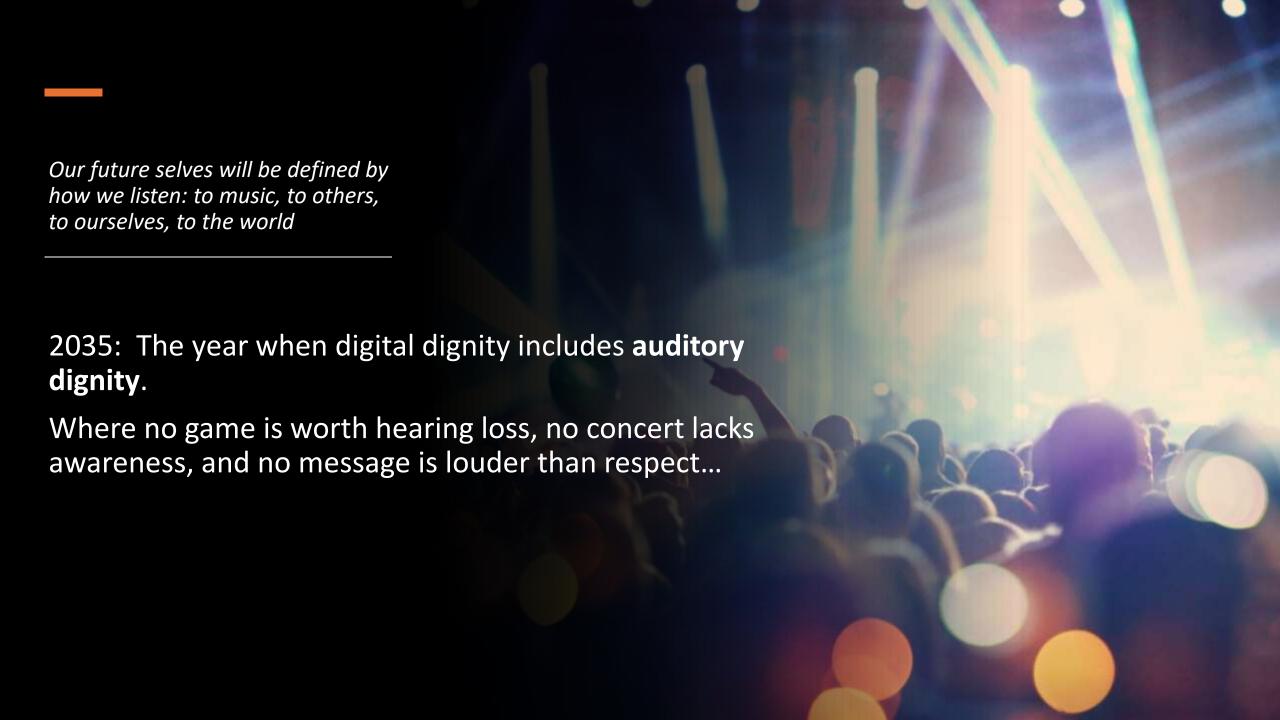


are a big hit and go viral on all social media platforms in 2035









2035: The human turn

Listening isn't passive. It is the foundation of **empathy, mental health, and belonging...**

The ambition is that the Make Listening Safe initiative becomes a **Make Listening Meaningful movement,**

shaping policy not only to protect ears, but to **cultivate listening as a human virtue** in education, healthcare, and design...



The Listening Society

It doesn't just regulate.

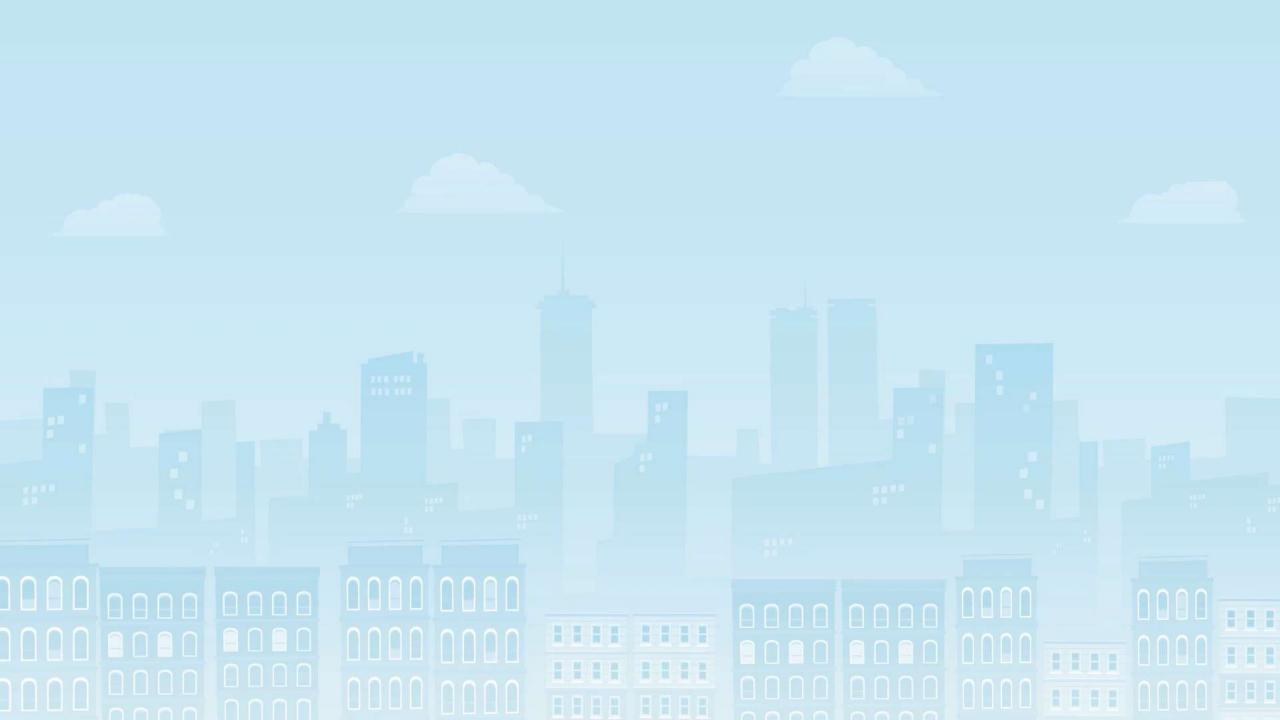
It educates, designs and inspires.

It puts safe listening into:

- Every classroom: through audio literacy programs
- Every device: by default and by design
- Every life stage: from infancy to elder care
- Every culture: respecting how we hear the world differently







How do we get there: Introduction to call for commitments

Shelly Chadha









Groudowork introduction

Call for commitments

All stakeholders...

- Government/Licensing and regulation
- Civil Society / NGOs
- Private Sector / Companies (including Game and device manufacturers)
- o Academia / Research Institutions
- Youth groups / Influencers
- Education Sector
- o Media / Communications
- Healthcare Providers
- Event Organizers / Venues



Commit to promote safe listening to avoid hearing loss caused by regular exposure to loud sounds.

Plan with this call for commitments?

- o Launch this call in 2025
- Inviting all stakeholders to discuss internally and make one or commitments
- Publish on WHO's website.
- Provide a global overview of actions and activities planned in the field of safe listening



Draft call for commitments (for review)



Call for commitments to 'Make Listening Safe' across the world (Draft for review)

	Commitment	Action
1	To implement the Global standard for safe listening devices and systems (p, g)	Adopt the standard and implement it in devices manufactured by (company name) by (date/year). (p) Ensure visibility of safe listening features in devices manufactured by (company name) by (date/year). (p) Incorporate safe listening features into product labelling, user manuals, or onboarding content of devices manufactured by (company name) by (date/year). (p) Adopt national/subnational legislation to inclusion of safe listening features in devices marketed in (name of country/place) by (date/year). (g)
2.	To implement the Global standard for safe listening venues and events (p, g, c, v)	Collaborate with three or more major event organizers to pilot the implementation of safe listening measures at public venues/events by (date/year). (v) Integrate safe listening venue standards into the licensing requirements for new entertainment venues in [Country/Region] by (date/year). [g.c] Train 500 venue staff and event planners in safe listening practices through certified workshops by (date/year). [g.c]
3,	To implement the Global standard for safe listening video gameplay and esports (p, y, m, v, c)	Adopt the standard and implement it in devices manufactured by (company name) by (date/year)_(p) Secure agreements with (number) leading video game companies to implement safe listening features (e.g., video gameplay device manufacturer or video game software title developer) in accordance with the Global standard by (date/year). (p) Deliver a public presentation or host a demonstration on the Global video

Group work Instructions

- Review proposed WHO developed commitments
- Provide constructive feedback on the WHO developed call for commitments
- Consider other stakeholder-specific opportunities that are missing and should be included as examples of commitments
- Become familiar with this call and be prepared to respond to it, once it is launched.
- Share ideas for increasing buy-in and shared responsibility among stakeholders represented in your group. (if time permits)

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound (between two to five years)



Call for commitments to 'Make Listening Safe' across the world (Draft for review)

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Report back

Document and submit their feedback

- Use the template provided to capture your group's suggestions and comments.
- Be as specific and practical as possible.
- Submit your completed feedback to the session facilitator by the end of the session.

- Part 1 Review and feedback template:
 For evaluating existing WHO-developed commitments, gaps in stakeholders and identifying gaps in commitments.
- Part 2 Ownership and promotion template: For suggesting how commitments can be adopted and encouraging stakeholder buy-in (if time permits)

Commitment Statement	Clarity (Yes/No)	Relevance (High/Med/Low)	Feasibility (High/Med/Low)	Suggested Changes	Missing actions or Stakeholder/ Specific Commitments (if any)
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Reporting template

Part 2 – Ownership and promotion template: For suggesting how commitments can be adopted and encouraging stakeholder buy-in (if time permits)

Commitment statement	Stakeholders who can Promote This	How can this be promoted or adopted?	What would encourage Buy-in or ownership?	Next Steps or Follow-Up Actions
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	79011 90			
		M. J. W.		

Reportingtemplate

- Will be provided in the group
- Instructions are also included in the template for reference

Group work on call for commitments





Reflections on call









Emerging issues

Lauren Dillard







Sources of unsafe listening among young people: A scoping review



Goal and approach

Identify sources of unsafe listening that are common among children and young people (≤ 35 yr) worldwide, not including music venues, personal listening devices or gaming.

Approach: Systematic scoping literature review

Life-course health perspective

Health-related behaviors in childhood and adolescence can inform behaviors and health in adulthood



- Limited research specific to hearing
- Robust evidence from other areas of public health
 - → e.g., tobacco use, diet, physical activity

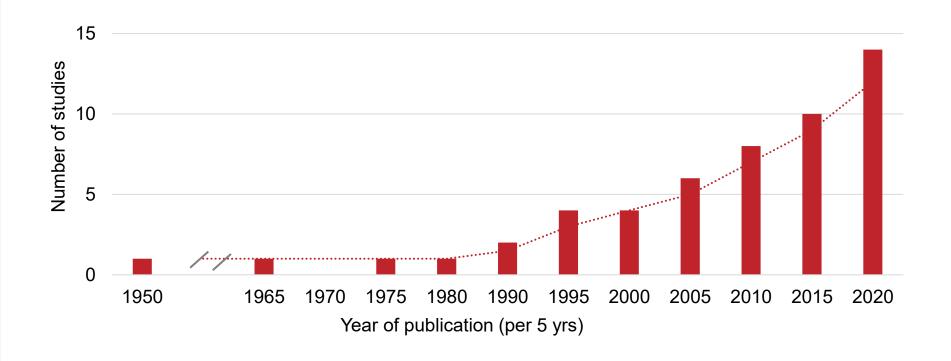
Importance of early intervention to promote healthy behaviors and choices, including those related to safe listening



Overview of studies

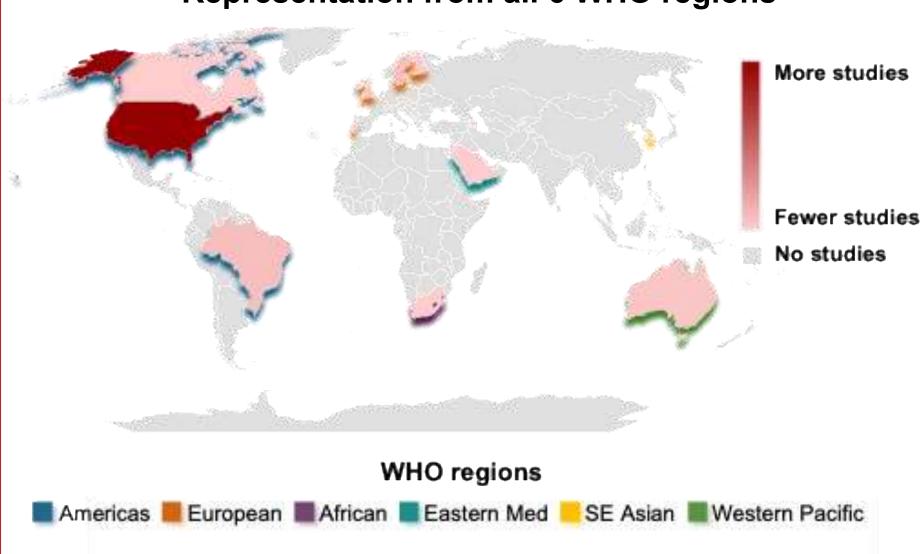
We identified 53 studies on sources of unsafe listening among young people aged ≤ 35 yr

(not including venues, personal listening devices, gaming)

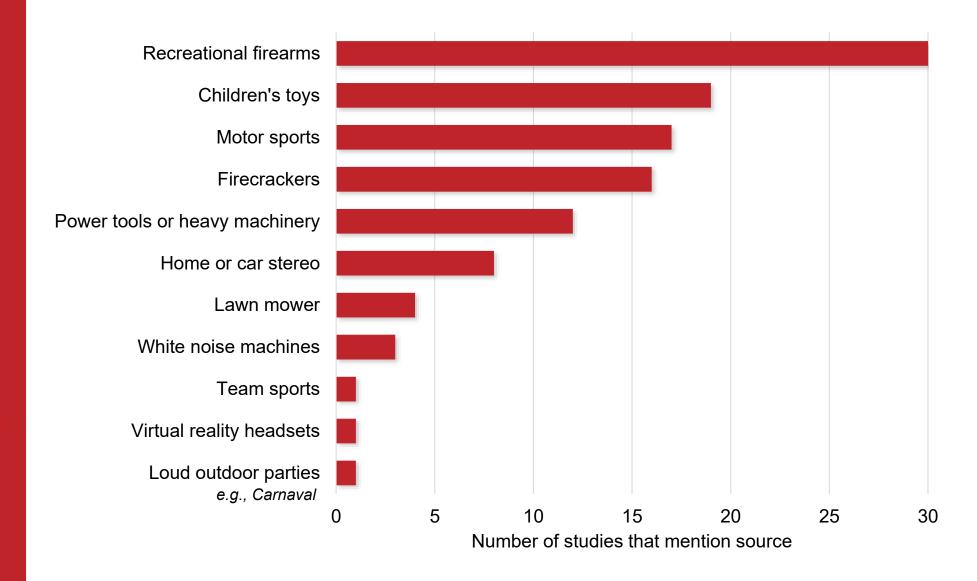


Location of studies

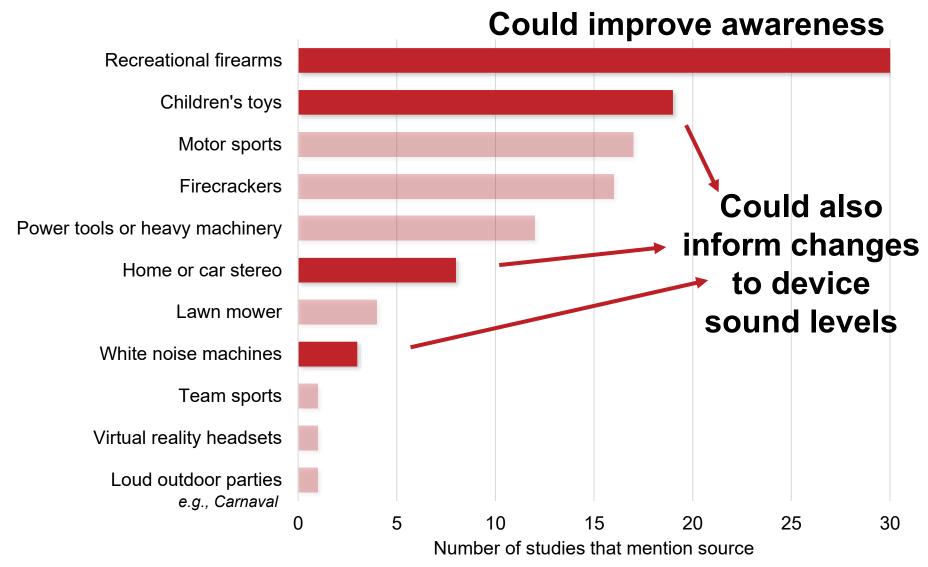
Representation from all 6 WHO regions



Sources of unsafe listening



Sources of unsafe listening

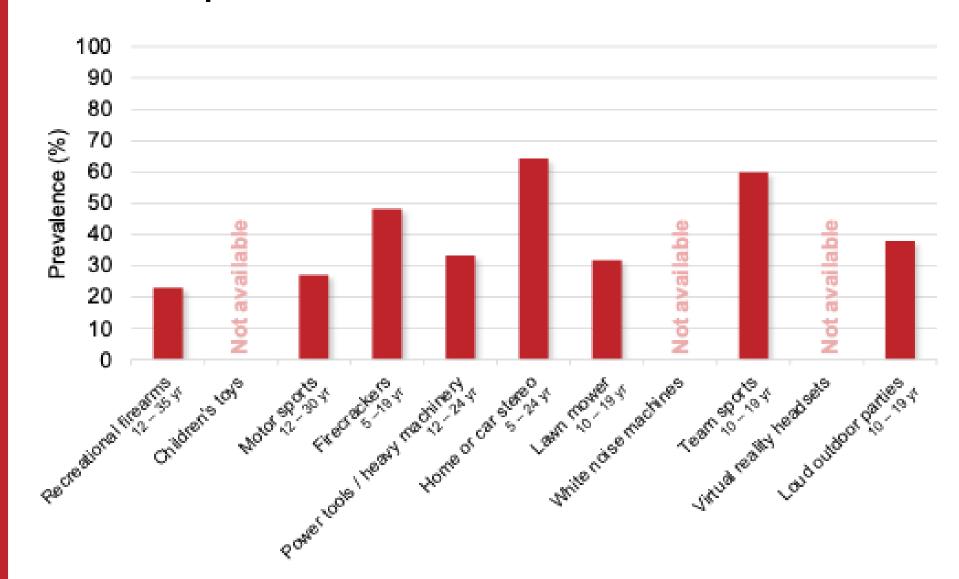


Axelsson et al., 1981; Bhatt et al., 2018, 2020; Carter et al., 2016; Gondim et al., 2024; Hoffman et al., 2019; Knobel et al., 2012, 2014; Mahboudi et al., 2013; Mostafapour et al., 1998;

Musleh et al., 2020; Reel et al., 2022; Su et al., 2017; Warner-Czyz et al., 2016

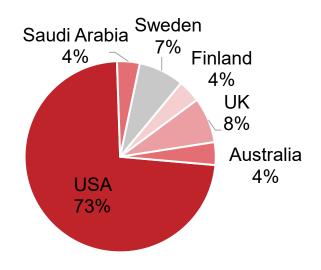
Prevalence of exposures

Pooled prevalence across studies with available data



Recreational firearm use

Most studies from USA



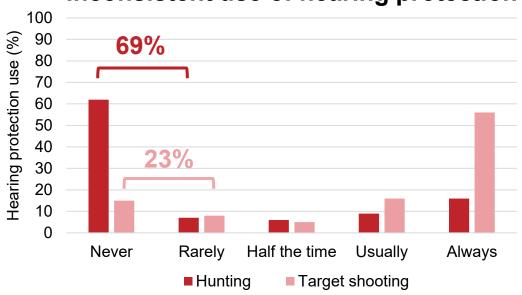
Among sample of USA firearms users, 78% began firearm use prior to age 10

- Focus on hunting and target shooting
- Regional differences in prevalence of exposure

- Australia: 10%

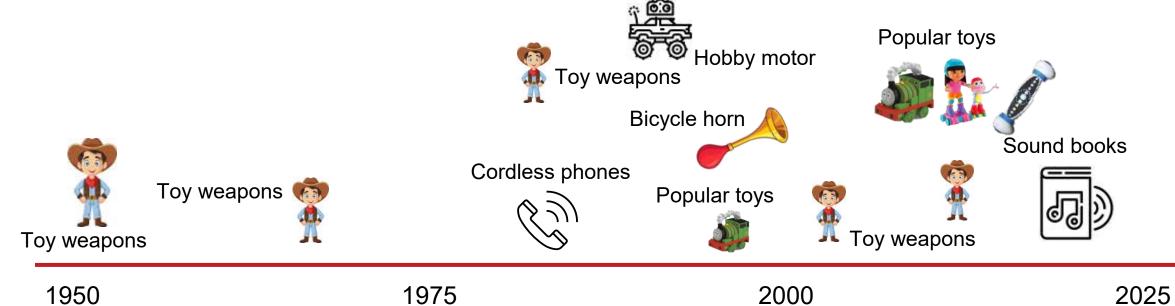
- USA: 30%

Inconsistent use of hearing protection



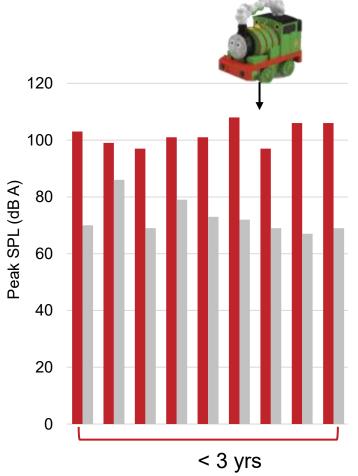
Meinke et al., 2014 Stewart et al., 2014 Carter et al., 2016 Su et al., 2017 Hoffman et al., 2019 Fageeh et al., 2025

Studies have mentioned risk of hearing damage from various toys for the last 75 years

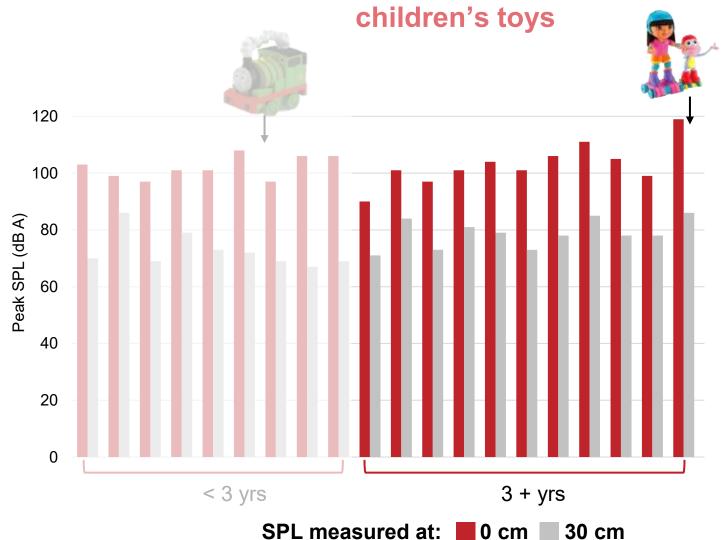


Time (year)

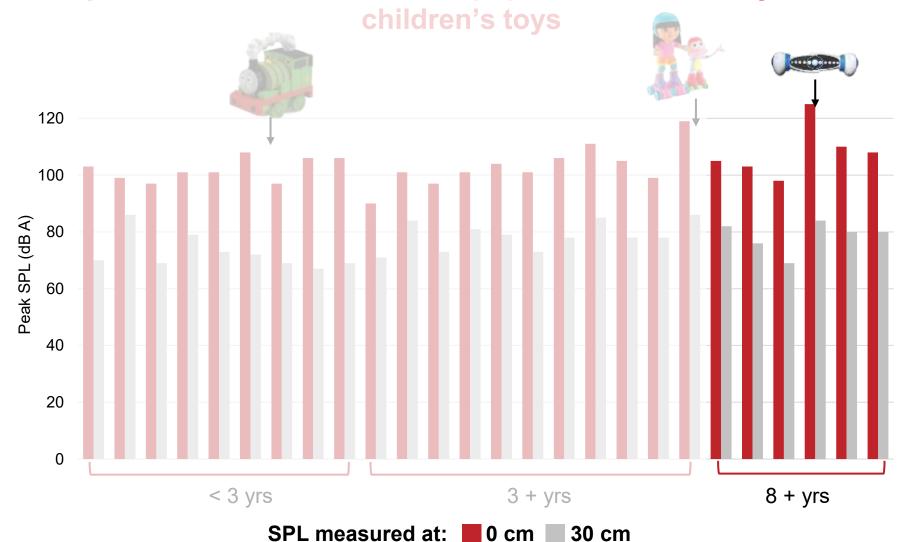
Study measured mean SPL of 26 popular, commercially available children's toys



Study measured mean SPL of 26 popular, commercially available

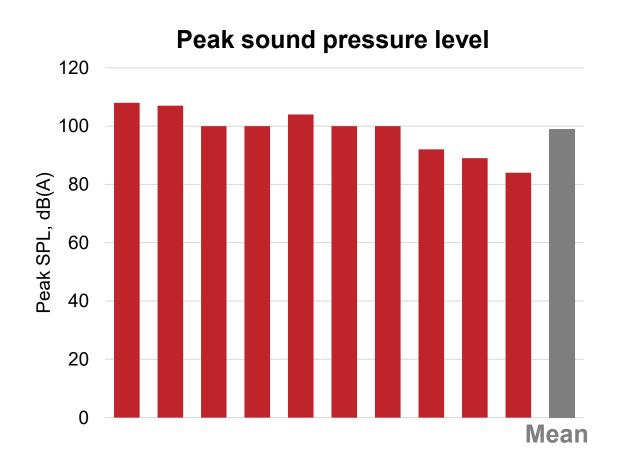


Study measured mean SPL of 26 popular, commercially available



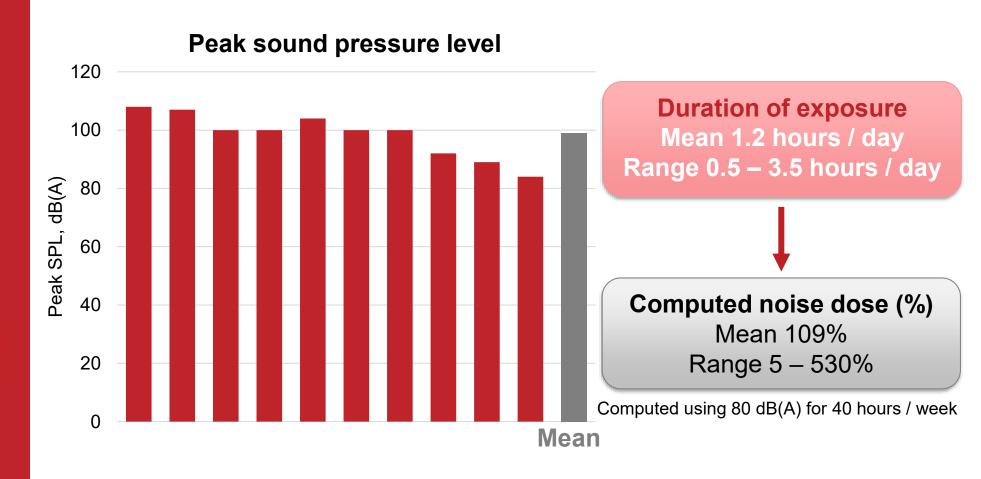
Car stereos

10 listeners were asked to set their (factory) car stereos to preferred listening levels



Car stereos

10 listeners were asked to set their (factory) car stereos to preferred listening levels



White noise machines

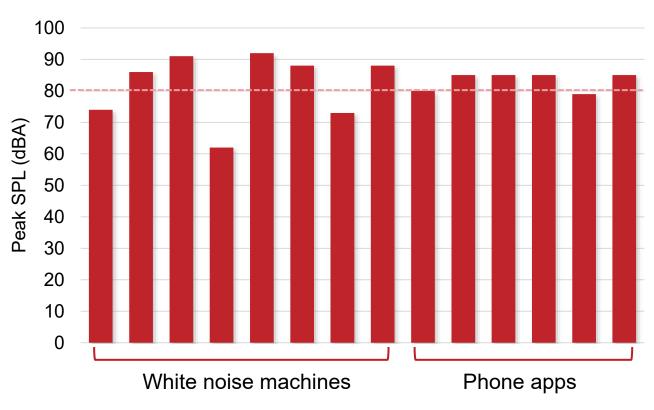
- Popular devices used to help infants and children sleep
- Exposure is often for long periods of time (all night + naps)



White noise machines

Study tested 8 commercially available white noise machines and 6 white noise phone apps

Maximum sound pressure level for each device



8 hr time weighted average

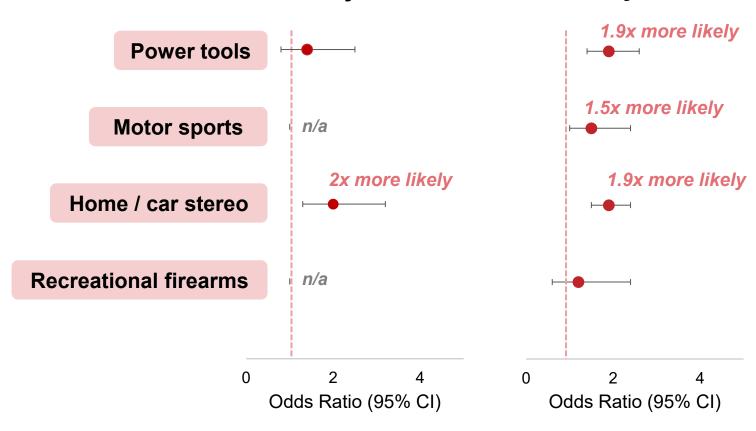
Mean (all devices) 83.3 dB(A)

SPL measured at 10 cm

Relationships with tinnitus



12 to 19 years old



Some studies show firearm use is associated with hearing loss

USA (12-19 yr): firearm use (vs non) *3x more likely* to have speech-frequency hearing loss





Sources of unsafe listening

- Firearms
- Toys
- Motor sports
- Firecrackers
- Power tools / heavy machinery
- Home or car stereo
- Lawn mowers
- White noise machines
- Team sports
- Virtual reality headsets
- Loud outdoor parties



Conclusions

- Identified sources of unsafe listening common among children and young people
- Sound level often exceeds (or nearly) permissible levels
- Some research showed relationships of sound exposure with auditory damage, even in very young ages
 - → Some does not: differences in exposure and outcome measures, study populations, time needed to detect associations

Looking to the future...

Opportunities to prioritize safe listening across various recreational activities

Early intervention to reduce harmful listening practices could influence long-term health behaviors





Emerging issues: Impact of digitally treated sound

Professor Paul Avan











Emerging issues - impact of digitally treated sound (compressed intensity)

Thamara dos Santos, Christian Hugonnet, Pierrick Bordiga,
Paul Avan

[Université Clermont Auvergne, UFMG, Association Semaine du Son, Institut de l'Audition, IHU reConnect, Paris, France]





compression, a widespread tool

- natural, in the cochlea
- hearing aids and neuroprostheses (cochlear implants)
- processed music and speech (broadcast sound, videoconferences)

WHY?

- · to make target sound salient, all the time, relative to background 'noise'
- goal = cancel quiet windows in which noise might emerge and take over

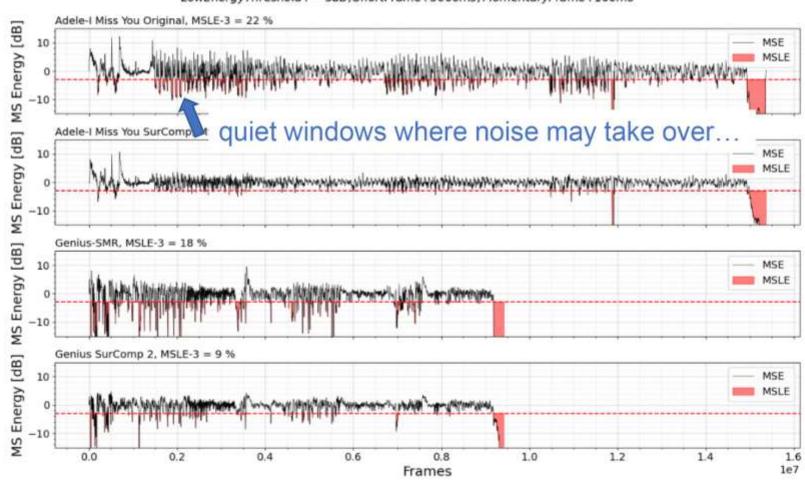
CONSEQUENCES

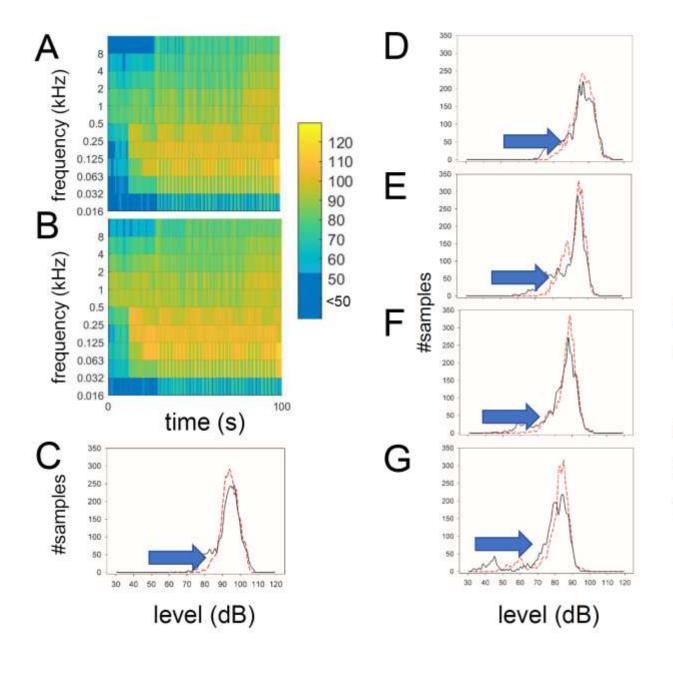
- quiet windows no longer exist...
- · auditory fatigue enhanced?

how?

MSLE-3 - Low Energy Detection

LowEnergyThreshold: - 3dB, ShortFrame: 3000ms, MomentaryFrame: 100ms





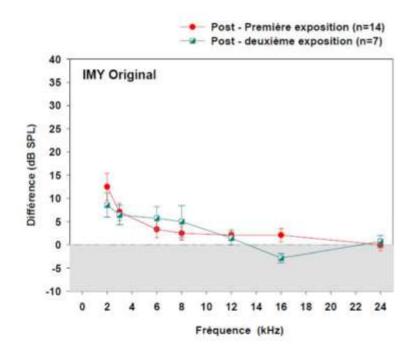
Dos Santos et al, Hearing Res.2024 doi: 10.1016/j.heares.2024.109120

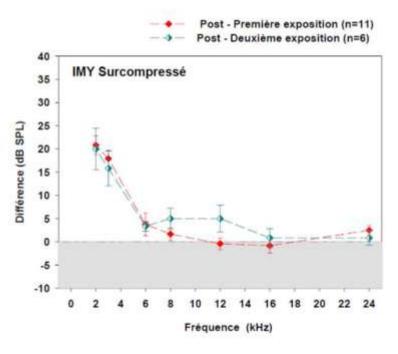
a single 4h-exposure to amplified music @ 102 dBA, compressed vs non compressed

choice of a preliminary model for a proof of concept

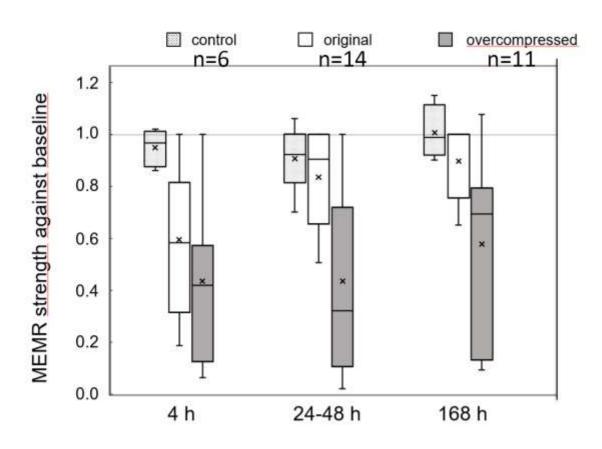
- guinea pig
 - same frequency range as humans
 - can be tested awake
 - easy noninvasive monitoring
 - cochlea
 - part of the auditory brainstem
 - otoacoustic emissions for both purposes, tested at D0, D0 post exposure, D1-2, D7

cochlea unaffected

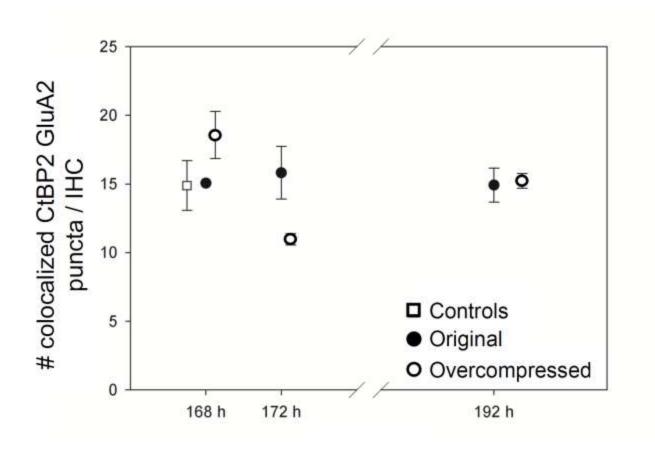




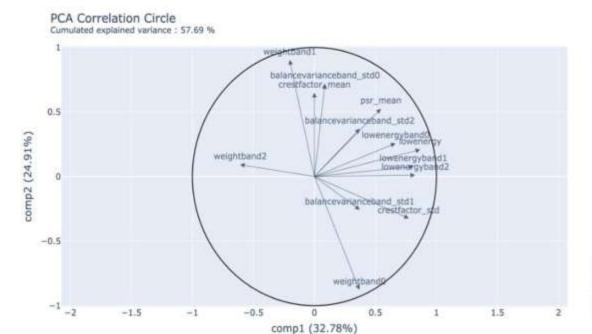
middle-ear muscle protective reflex protracted and strong decrease after compressed exposure only

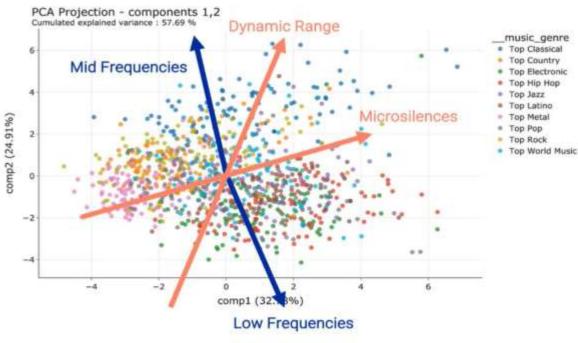


no hint of 'hidden' synaptopathy: another entity?

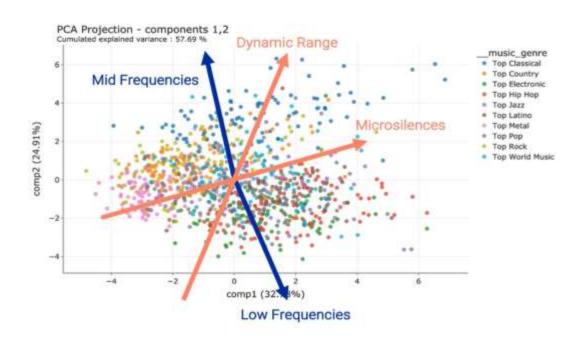


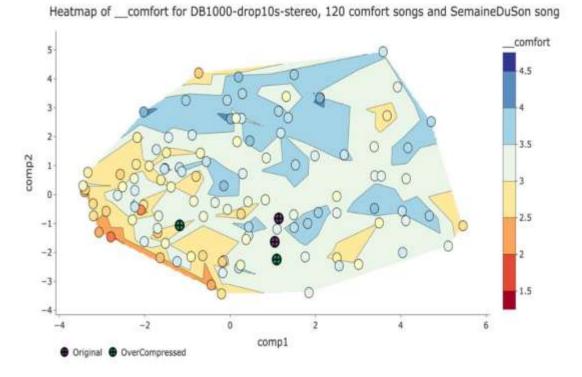
Looking at repositories of digital files / music





Influence on subjective evaluation?









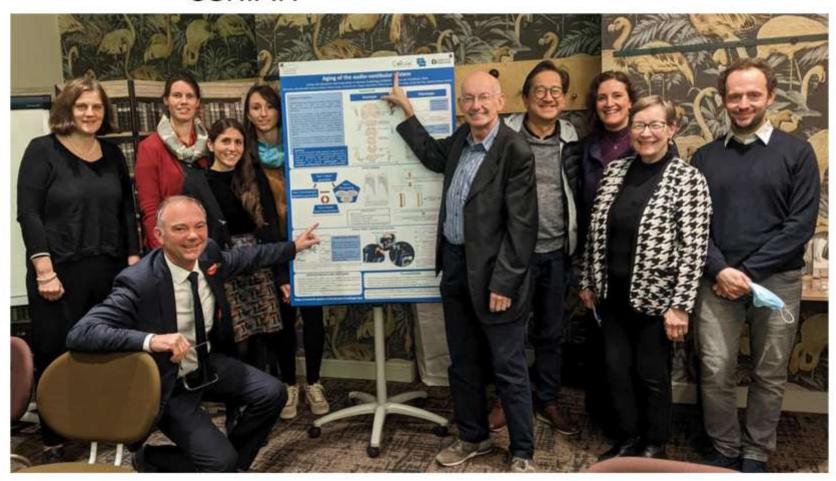
mild and not direct

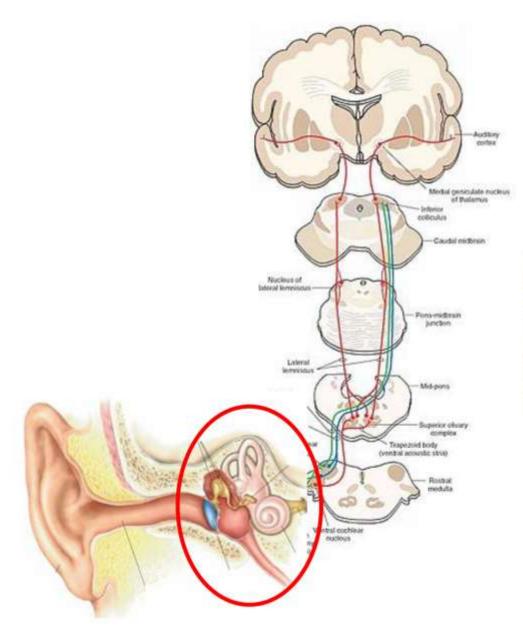
conclusions

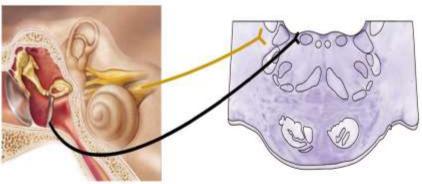
- the effects of digitally manipulated sound do not follow standard rules
- likely, the (deliberate) cancellation of short periods of rest generates fatigability
- the resulting disorder is 'hidden' to standard audiometry
- caveat : fatigue does not mean damage
- what new standards? how long, how loud, how often?

remerciements: collaborateurs 'AUDIOGENAGE'

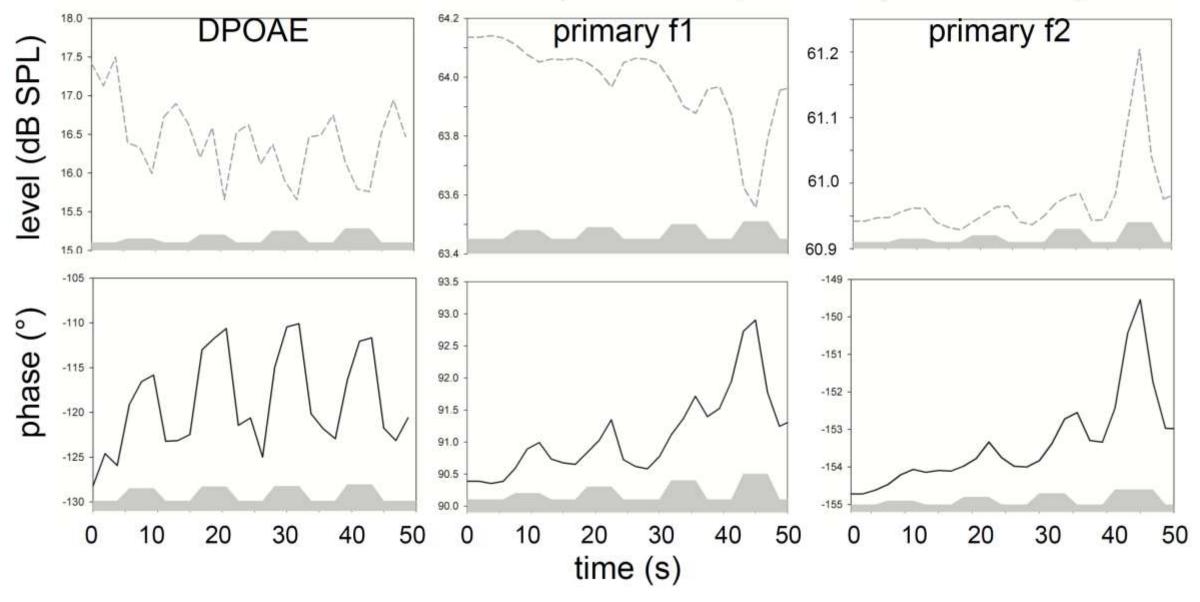
CeRIAH







effets sur une boucle réflexe protectrice (audition plus centrale)





Questions, discussions



Introduction to Day 2 & 3 Thematic group work sessions



Thematic groups

Group A – Main room Devices, systems, video gameplay & esports

- Chair: Masahito Kawamori
- WHO facilitator: Shelly Chadha
- Purpose:

To explore opportunities for embedding safe listening standards and principles into personal listening devices, systems, and platforms for video gameplay and esports.

Group B – K1 room Venues and events

- Chair: Adam Hill
- WHO facilitator: Arveen Sodhi
- Purpose:

To support the global uptake of WHO's standard for safe listening in venues and live events.







Thematic groups

Group C – K2 room Research protocols

- Chair: Adrian Fuente
- WHO facilitator: Lauren Dillard
- Purpose:

To finalise a shared research protocol for assessing recreational sound exposure and its impact on hearing, and to identify global research priorities.

Group D – D room Advocacy and awareness

- Chairs: Hayatee Hasan & Carolina Der
- WHO facilitator: Carolina Der
- Purpose:

To develop coordinated strategies for raising awareness and driving action through advocacy, education, and cross-sector partnerships.



Group A – Main room Devices, systems, video gameplay & esports

- Ms. Yunjin SONG
- Ms. Tatjana Sachse
- Mr. Thomas Lund
- Mr. Simão Ferraz de Campos
- Mr. Sergi Mesonero
- Mr. Raju Desai
- Mr. Mark Laureyns
- Mr. Kuba Mazur
- Mr. Masahito Kawamori
- Mr. Jérémie Voix

- Ms. Melita Moore
- Mr. Chucri (Chuck)
 Kardous
- Mr. Cédric MATEU
- Mr. Brian Schmidt
- Ms. Lidia Best



Group B – K1 room Venues and events

- Mr. Raphael Elmiger
- Mr. Nick Rainbow
- Mr. Michael Santucci
- Mr. Jörn Nettingsmeier
- Jessica Borowski
- Mr. Ian Hoffman
- Mr. Adam Hill
- Mr. Rob Shepheard



Group C – K2 room Research protocols

- Mr. Winfried Schlee
- Ms. Sarah Grinn
- Mr. Richard Neitzel
- Dr. Gáborján Anita
- Ms. Kelly Tremblay
- Ms. Colleen Leprell
- Mr. Berthold Langguth
- Ms. Adriana Bender M De Lacerda
- Mr. Adrian Fuente



Group D – D room Advocacy and awareness

- Ms. Teresa Amat
- Mr. Antonio Morant
- Ms. Sara Rubinelli
- Mr. Nicola Diviani
- Ms. Karissa Chesky
- Mr. Antonio Morant Albelda
- Mr. Andreas Thulin
- Ms. Aderinola Olopade
- Mr. Bilel JAMOUSSI

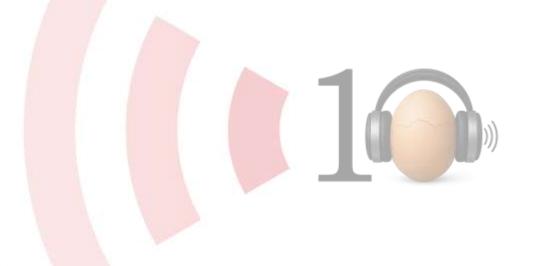


Thematic groups

- 9:00 meet at the main room
- Go to rooms K1, K2 and G3 guided by WHO facilitator
- Different agendas
- Break for coffee and lunch
- At the end of the second day group conclusions presentation (template will be provided)

Contributory Dinner

Le Karne 1st July, 7:30 pm









Plenary session and meeting close



