

WORLD REPORT ON HEARING



The cover image is an artistic representation of a sound wave entering the cochlea. The sound wave in this image represents the musical notes of the 'Sound of Life', a song specially created for the WHO Make Listening Safe initiative by Ricky Kej. Download the song here <https://youtu.be/EmXwAnP9puQ>

WORLD REPORT *ON HEARING*



World Health
Organization

World report on hearing

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WEB ANNEXES

WEB ANNEX A

Quality of evidence

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/339906/9789240021501-eng.pdf>

WEB ANNEX B

The return on investment from actions to prevent and/or mitigate the impact of hearing loss

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/339906/9789240021501-eng.pdf>

WEB ANNEX C

Tracer indicators for monitoring progress in ear and hearing care

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/339906/9789240021501-eng.pdf>

FOREWORD

Hearing loss has often been referred to as an “invisible disability”, not just because of the lack of visible symptoms, but because it has long been stigmatized in communities and ignored by policy-makers.

Unaddressed hearing loss is the third largest cause of years lived with disability globally. It affects people of all ages, as well as families and economies. An estimated US\$ 1 trillion is lost each year due to our collective failure to adequately address hearing loss. While the financial burden is enormous, what cannot be quantified is the distress caused by the loss of communication, education and social interaction that accompanies unaddressed hearing loss.

What makes this matter more pressing than ever is the fact that the number of people with hearing loss is likely to rise considerably in the coming decades. Over 1.5 billion people currently experience some degree of hearing loss, which could grow to 2.5 billion by 2050. In addition, 1.1 billion young people are at risk of permanent hearing loss from listening to music at loud volumes over prolonged periods of time. The *World report on hearing* shows that evidence-based and cost-effective public health measures can prevent many causes of hearing loss.

To guide future action, the *World report on hearing* outlines a package of interventions for Member States to adopt, and proposes strategies for their integration in national health systems to ensure equitable access to ear and hearing care services for all those who need them, without financial hardship, in accordance with the principles of universal health coverage.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of hearing. As we have struggled to maintain social contact and remain connected to family, friends and colleagues, we have relied on being able to hear them more than ever before. It has also taught us a hard lesson, that health is not a luxury item, but the foundation of social, economic and political development. Preventing and treating disease and disability of all kinds is not a cost, but an investment in a safer, fairer and more prosperous world for all people.

As we respond and recover from the pandemic, we must listen to the lessons it is teaching us, including that we can no longer afford to turn a deaf ear to hearing loss.



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General, World Health Organization



When I travel to countries around the world, I meet girls who have struggled against poverty, child marriage and discrimination to stay in school and finish their education. These young women are from different backgrounds, practice different religions and speak different languages; but they share the same determination to pursue their dreams for the future.

With all the barriers to equality facing girls, women and other marginalized people, those who need hearing care are further disadvantaged and too often left behind. About 1 billion people around the world are at risk of avoidable hearing loss. WHO estimates that over 400 million, including 34 million children, live with disabling hearing loss, affecting their health and quality of life.

Because I have also suffered hearing loss, I know this doesn't need to be an obstacle to education. With access to health care, rehabilitation and technology, people with disabling hearing loss can participate equally in education, employment and their communities. Hearing loss doesn't keep them from reaching their full potential: poverty and discrimination do.

To address this global public health challenge, the *World report on hearing* offers evidence-based, equitable and cost-effective actions for ear and hearing care. Following the guidance in this report, WHO Member States can help prevent hearing loss and ensure that people with hearing loss can access the care they need.

I hope our leaders will work together to implement the recommendations in the *World report on hearing* – and give every person with hearing loss the chance to contribute to our shared future.

— Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai
Nobel laureate and UN messenger of peace



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