

SCHEMATIZATION

- e₁. A U.S. study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found hearing problems among youngsters have risen by nearly a third in 15 years.
- e₂. The study compared national surveys from the early 1990s and the mid-2000s and included a few thousand teens aged 12 to 19. Each survey was designed to represent the entire country.
- e₃. In the first survey, trained staff found about 15 percent of teenagers suffered some degree of hearing loss. 15 years later, the number of teenagers experiencing hearing loss had risen by a third, to nearly 20 percent –one in every five teenagers.
- e₄. Most of the hearing loss was in one ear only but the extent of loss was getting worse. While it was usually slight, one in 20 adolescents had more pronounced problems -- up 50 percent since the first survey.
- e₅. Dr. Josef Shargorodsky of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston was surprised by the new findings as better medical care for ear infections -- one of the usual suspects in hearing damage --should in theory have decreased the numbers.
- e₆. Researchers said the reasons for the rise were unclear as teenagers, when asked about noise exposure -on the job, from firearms or recreational activities, for instance - didn't indicate any change.
- e₇. Teenagers really underestimate how much noise they are exposed to; few people would call it noise when they listen to music on their MP3 player.
- e₈. Researchers did not single out personal listening devices or iPods for the growing problem of hearing loss in teenagers.
- e_n. Some risk factors, such as loud sound exposure from listening to music, may be of particular importance to adolescents," the report said. Alison Grimes, who manages the audiology clinic at Ronald Reagan-UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, said although it's not clear that these devices are to blame, it was still a good idea to turn down the volume and take frequent breaks from listening.

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RIVAL EXPLANATION

- t₁. The dramatic increase in general environmental noise pollution in the U.S. over the past 15 years is to blame for the increasing incidence of teen hearing loss.
- t₂. The rise of teen hearing loss mostly in one ear is directly correlated to cell phone and Bluetooth use which has increased dramatically in the last 15 years
- t₃. Due to the increasingly high cost of medical insurance, people are not seeking medical attention for common ear infections. Left untreated, the damage worsens and has given rise to increased hearing loss in teens.

RANKING

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ASSESSMENT

The rival evidence provides the best explanation. The dramatic increase in general environmental noise pollution in the U.S. over the past 15 years is to blame for the increasing incidence of teen hearing loss.