

Tinnitus in Canada

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Objectives: To analyze raw data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey pertaining to tinnitus in Canadian adults.

Background: Tinnitus, which has no cure, can be a temporary irritant or a life-altering condition. Many factors can precipitate tinnitus, including hearing loss, exposure to loud noise and other otologic causes, neurological injuries or disease, dental disorders, some medications, and certain infectious diseases. This study summarizes new tinnitus data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS).

Methods: Data were collected for individuals aged 19 to 79 years (n=6,571) from 2012 through 2015 as part of the CHMS. Tinnitus is described as “the presence of hissing, buzzing, ringing, rushing or roaring sounds in your ears when there is no other sound around you.” Bothersome tinnitus refers to tinnitus affecting sleep, concentration or mood. Participants were asked if they had experienced tinnitus within the past year. Risk factors associated with tinnitus were also examined using bivariate and logistic regression analyses.

Results: An estimated 37% of adult Canadians (9.2 million) had experienced tinnitus in the past year; it was bothersome for 7% of the population. Individuals aged 19 to 29 were significantly more likely to have past-year tinnitus (46%) than those aged 30 to 49 (33%) and 50 to 70 (35%). High blood pressure and arthritis were significantly associated with tinnitus. Tinnitus was associated with poor self-reported mental health, mood disorder, a weak sense of community belonging, high daily stress and poor quality sleep. People with hearing loss and tinnitus were twice as likely as those with hearing loss alone to use hearing aids, at 11% compared with 5% respectively.

Conclusions: Tinnitus is a common condition among Canadian adults. Recent exposure to loud noise may contribute to the higher prevalence of past-year tinnitus at younger ages. Canadians could benefit from greater awareness of tinnitus, prevention strategies and management options.