

In-depth TILDA report details the impact of hearing loss among Ireland's older people

Researchers at The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) at Trinity College have released a detailed report investigating the impact of hearing loss and hearing aid use on psychosocial health and wellbeing of Ireland's older adults. The report will be launched tomorrow, Friday, 3rd March 2023 to mark the World Health Organisation's [World Hearing Day 2023](#).

Entitled, "*Impact of hearing loss and hearing aid use on psychosocial health and well-being and healthcare cover in the older population in Ireland*", the report estimates the proportion of older adults in Ireland with hearing loss, whether or not they wear hearing aids, how they rate their own hearing with and without hearing aids and whether this changed over a 6-year period (2012-2018). It also examines how healthcare cover affects hearing aid use and access to hearing services.

SOME KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT INCLUDE:

- The **percentage of men with hearing loss rose** from 40% to 46%, while the percentage of women with hearing loss rose from 32% to 39%, in 6 years between 2012-2018.
- Among those aged 75 and up, 58% of men and 54% of women reported having some degree of hearing loss.
- **Social participation was lower** for women who report poor self-rated hearing without hearing aids, but there was no difference in social engagement in either men or women who wear hearing aids, regardless of how they rated their hearing.
- Poor self-rated hearing without hearing aids was associated with **higher depressive symptoms and loneliness and lower quality of life**; hearing aid use was however associated with better psychosocial health and well-being scores.

Dr Christine McGarrigle, lead author of the report and Senior Research Fellow at Trinity College Dublin, said:

"We are delighted to share these important findings from TILDA. Given the high prevalence of hearing loss with age and as hearing difficulty can affect social participation and well-being, the public health impact on access to health services and inclusion in social participation is highly relevant. Our findings also indicate that more than one in ten older adults who needed hearing services didn't access them, suggesting that there is scope for further assessment and intervention to improve hearing function in Ireland."

She continued,

"The largely modifiable nature of this disability means that improvement in audiology screening at an earlier stage and promotion of uptake of hearing aids may significantly contribute to the reduction of disability and associated consequences in the older population, thereby improving the ageing experience for many."

Brendan Lennon, Advocacy, Research and Public Affairs Director of Chime, the National Charity for Deafness and Hearing Loss, welcomed the release of the report. He said:

"Hearing loss is a common health condition experienced by many adults in Ireland. It is often ignored by the individuals affected and health professionals, but unmanaged hearing loss

can have significant impact on people's lives in terms of relationships with family and friends and increased risk of isolation and loneliness. This important new report from TILDA confirms that hearing loss can also lead to other health issues such as depression, cognitive decline and even dementia. Thankfully, hearing aids are an effective solution for most people and what we need to do as a society is to put the right supports and services in place to make it easier and more affordable for people to get timely treatment for their hearing loss."

The launch of TILDA's report will coincide with the release of the documentary featuring Dr McGarrigle discussing her work, *Hearing Loss - Through the Noise*, which airs on Friday, 3rd March at 7pm on Dublin Community TV (DCTV) – Virgin Media Channel 802.

To read the full report visit [here](#)

TILDA is funded by the Department of Health, the Health Research Board and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Note to editors:

About TILDA

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), based in Trinity College Dublin, is a large-scale, nationally representative, longitudinal study on ageing in Ireland. TILDA collects information on all aspects of health and life from people aged 45 and over in a series of data collection waves, every two years. This information is used for many research projects and helps to identify national priorities and policies on issues such as health and well-being, healthcare needs, caregiving, and retirement. Since it began in 2009, over 8,500 people across Ireland have taken part in TILDA. Find out more, at www.tilda.ie

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