

WE'RE HERE TO HELP MUSICIANS^{UK}

Professional musicians in the UK **MUSICIANS' HEARING SURVEY**

"Noise induced hearing loss is 100% preventable and 100% irreversible."

Paul Checkley, Musicians' Hearing Services

Help Musicians UK is here for musicians throughout their careers. Since 1921, we've helped thousands of musicians establish themselves in the music business, get through a serious crisis, cope with long term difficulties and enjoy retirement. As well as providing advice and guidance, we give financial and emotional support. For many, we are a lifeline.

Last year our Musicians' Health and Wellbeing Survey revealed that 47% of musician respondents had experienced hearing problems, and a 2014 German study found musicians have nearly four times the rate of hearing loss of the general population and a 57% greater chance of experiencing tinnitus.

To find out more about this important issue, we surveyed almost 700 musicians*. The survey revealed very high levels of hearing loss amongst musicians of all ages with most feeling their work in music was the major reason for this.

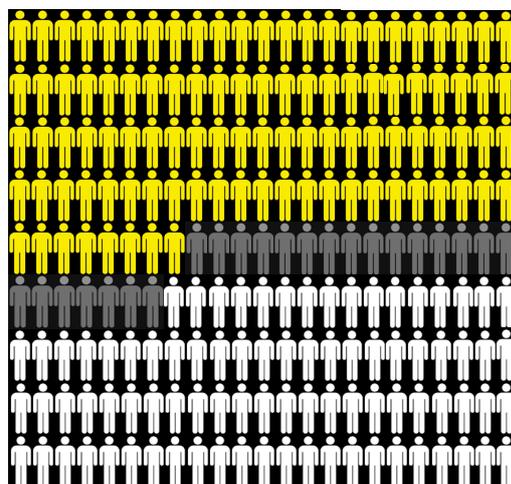
Hearing is critical for musicians. The impact of losing it can be a profound and sensitive issue.

Musicians told us they feel they should use hearing protection. But we learnt that very few use it every time they play or sing; some because they find it affects their playing, some because they are unaware of the solutions, some worry about the cost and many believe hearing loss is the price of their job.

*692 musicians, aged 18 – 75 took the time to complete the Hearing Survey.

Key facts

- **59.5% of respondents told us that they had experienced hearing loss, or answered that they don't know.**
- **78% of these respondents told us that working as a musician was at least one of the factors that had contributed to their hearing loss.**
- **39% of respondents told us that they had not sought professional help as they believe hearing problems are an unavoidable effect of their work as a musician.**
- **81% of all respondents believe that musicians should use hearing protection, but only 67% have.**



-  Have experienced hearing loss.
-  Do not know.
-  Have not experienced hearing loss.

Hearing loss

40.5% of respondents answered yes to "Have you experienced hearing loss?" A further 19% told us that they didn't know.

Of those with identified hearing issues, 78.3% told us that they felt that working as a musician was at least one of the factors that had contributed. A multiple choice question asked musicians to select as many factors as were applicable to their hearing issues. 31% cited listening to music as one of the reasons and 29.4% included age-related causes.

"Sitting in the direct line and close proximity of trumpets and trombones for 25 years has given me an imbalance between the levels of hearing in my ears."

- **62% of respondents with hearing issues told us that their hearing loss is permanent.**
- **75% told us that at least one of the issues they experience is tinnitus (hearing of sound when no external sound is present), 21% experienced hyperacusis (hypersensitivity to noise) and a further 15% experience increased sensitivity or pain.**
- **50% of musicians said that they had sought professional help for their hearing loss. Notably, 52% of people who told us they had visited their GP said that the help they were given was not effective (on a scale of Not effective, Quite effective, Effective, Very effective, N/A)**
- **39% of respondents told us that one of the reasons they had not sought professional help is that they believe hearing problems are an unavoidable effect of working as a musician.**

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Hearing loss prevention

When a musician told us that they used customised earplugs and/or custom-moulded in ear monitors, they were much more likely to tell us that they found them 'very effective'* than any other form of hearing protection.

*on a scale of Not effective, Quite effective, Effective, Very effective, N/A.

- **81% of all respondents believe that musicians should use hearing protection.**
- **67% of respondents told us that they have used hearing protection.**
- **82% of respondents had used standard earplugs as at least one of the hearing protection measures they have tried.**
 - **50% of all respondents are concerned about noise levels at work.**
 - **83% of respondents told us that they feel that employers should provide hearing protection.**

We asked musicians when they started using hearing protection, and 42% said some form of damage or a symptom associated with their hearing had made them begin to use hearing protection.

"I came to use [hearing protection] once I had a problem, prevention is better than cure"

We asked musicians what had prompted them to start using hearing protection measures we referred to in the survey. 38% mentioned 'cost' in their response. Other answers referred to the hearing 'experience' being compromised, playing or singing being affected, and using protection not practical.

"There is a lot of stigma around hearing protection, which is fairly ironic given the vital nature hearing plays in the music profession!"

What's next?

First and foremost as the charity for musicians, Help Musicians UK wants to make sure that everyone associated with music – musicians, promoters, sound technicians, studio engineers, orchestra managers and more – really understand the risks and the solutions.

"Hearing loss is irreversible - and musicians rely on their hearing."

We need to encourage everyone to talk about this so that hearing issues for musicians are not taboo, or swept under the carpet.

Different solutions will work for different people, playing different instruments (or singing) in different settings at different times.

- **We will produce clear advice and information, so people can make informed choices.**
- **We will promote access to good quality hearing protection available to all musicians.**
- **We will develop and work with networks of specialists in the industry and in health services so musicians know where to turn for help with hearing issues.**
- **We will work to make musicians' hearing problems better understood in the NHS and audiology services.**
- **We will develop a programme of events around the country, and online, to spread the word.**
- **We will look at how we help individual musicians deal with hearing problems.**

Get in touch

We are **#HearForMusicians**. If you need help or know someone who does, we're here for you. And if you love music, and want to help the people who make it, please support us.

"Once you start to get problems it's often too late to stop them. You can only manage the problem..."

Visit helpmusicians.org.uk/hearing for more information
Get in touch at info@helpmusicians.org.uk

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