Author's response to reviews

Title: Main income sources and activities in people with self-reported hearing difficulties; a cross-sectional population-based study in Sweden

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Mr Dizon,

Thank you for the possibility to resubmit our manuscript # 1417354419736195 (Self-reported hearing difficulties, main income sources, and socio-economic status; a cross-sectional population-based study in Sweden). We also thank you for your valuable comments on the manuscript! Below is a point-to-point response to your concerns:

1. **Page 4, line 7:** Need a reference to support the statement that hearing difficulties are increasing in women.

   **Our answer:** Done!

2. **Page 5:** Please change "bad PTA results" to "abnormal PTA results".

   **Our answer:** The sentence in question has now been changed to: "Thus, while some individuals with self-reported hearing difficulties show no PTA-assessed hearing threshold elevations, others without such self-reported difficulties show significant PTA-assessed hearing threshold elevations [23]." (The previous formulation was: “Thus, people reporting having hearing difficulties may have normal PTA results, while others having bad PTA results may report not having hearing difficulties”).

3. **Page 15,** it isn’t clear what is meant by "labor market problems". Please revise to improve clarity.

   **Our answer:** The sentence in question has been changed to: ”The associations between having hearing difficulties and unemployment, sickness absence, and disability pension presented here are in agreement with previous results”. (The previous formulation was: “The associations between having hearing difficulties and labor market problems presented here confirm previous results”).
4. Page 16: Change "performances" to "performance".

Our answer: Done!

5. Page 16: The authors write that "a slightly higher prevalence in Swedish women aged 35-64 years was recently found". It’s not clear what the comparison group is for this sentence. Is it compared to men or to the 9.8% prevalence found by the authors?

Our answer: For clarity, the sentence in question has been changed to: "The age-specific prevalence of self-reported hearing difficulties in women in Sweden was recently shown to be slightly higher than in the present investigation (10.2% in 35-44-, 13.5% in 45-54-, and 18.1% in 55-64-year-olds (our study: 7.6%, 12.5%, and 15.0%, respectively)) [65], possibly due to differences in subjects included or how the question on self-reported hearing difficulties was formulated." (The previous formulation was: “A slightly higher prevalence in Swedish women aged 35-64 years was recently found [65], possibly due to differences in subjects included or how the question on self-reported hearing difficulties was formulated.”)

The first sentence of the same paragraph has also been altered in the revised manuscript. The new formulation goes: "The prevalence of hearing difficulties in the present investigation was 13.1% in men and 9.8% in women, in well agreement with a new Swedish study on 16-64-year-olds, in which 14.1% of the men and 10.2% of the women reported hearing difficulties [64].” (The previous formulation was: “The prevalence of hearing difficulties in the present study was 13.1% in men and 9.8% in women, in agreement with a recent Swedish study [64].”)

6. Page 17: The authors speculate on the reasons that hearing loss is more prevalent among men in rural areas. However, they fail to include workplace exposures. Isn’t it possible that occupational exposures may also be higher or use of hearing protectors on the job are less prevalent (e.g. farmers being exposed to farm machinery and/or fail to use hearing protectors)?

Our answer: Thank you for this comment! A discussion about possible regional differences in occupational noise exposures has been included in the paragraph in question, in the revised manuscript.

7. Page 17: Change "incomes sources" to "income source".

Our answer: Done!

8. Table 2: Need to spell out/define "SES".

Our answer: Done!
Our answer: Done, also in Tables 3 through 6!

9. Need to add a table like Table 1 (or perhaps add columns to Table 1) to show the distribution of the confounders among those whose main income source is sickness/disability benefits. Otherwise it is difficult to interpret Tables 5 and 6.

Our answer: Thank you for this comment! We have followed your suggestion to add columns to Table 1 to show the distribution of confounders among those whose main income source is sickness benefits or disability pension. Moreover, a presentation of some of these results has been added to the first part of the results section.

Yours sincerely,
Pernilla Videhult Pierre