

# Hearing loss and work participation

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STUDY RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION

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«The difficult parts are projects or work tasks that entail a lot of coordination between departments and locations and video meetings. It doesn't work well... What follows is a lot of guessing... I have been in all kinds of settings with hearing impairment, and have thought that I do not want to experience them again»

Male, 30-45, severe hearing loss

# Background

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- Prevalence: 5 % of the world population (WHO, 2017)
- In Norway: 11 % of the age group 45-64 (Engdahl, 2015)
- Low educational attainment (Emmett & Francis, 2015)
- Increased un-/underemployment (Emmett & Francis, 2015; Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012)
- Increased risk of low income (Emmett & Francis, 2015; Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012)
- Increased risk of disability pension (Helvik, Krokstad & Tambs, 2013)
- High prevalence of exhaustion (Nachtegaal et al, 2009; Kramer, Kapteyn & Houtgast, 2006)
- More troubled by background noise (Hua et al, 2013; Kramer, Kapteyn & Houtgast, 2006)

# Hearing loss and work participation in Norway

*Elucidating participation and displacement factors*

- Survey among persons of working age with hearing loss  
*Hearing loss and work participation: a cross-sectional study in Norway. Svinndal, Solheim, Rise and Jensen, 2018*
- Interview study among employees with hearing loss  
*Working life trajectories with hearing impairment. Svinndal, Jensen and Rise, in press.*
- Interview study among managers supervising employees with hearing loss  
*Leader responsibility for employees with hearing impairment. A qualitative study exploring employers' experiences. Svinndal, Jensen and Rise, submitted.*

# Survey results

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## EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER

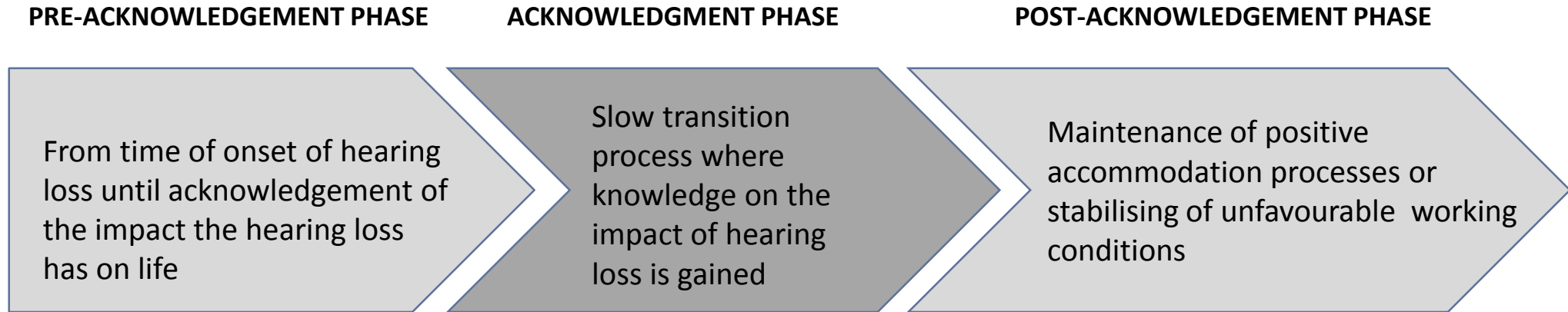
- Employment rate: 76.6% (74.3%)
- In women
  - Severity of hearing loss associated with employment rate and part-time work
  - Higher prevalence of sick-leave
  - Lower workability scores
  - Higher hearing disability and fatigue scores

## WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION

- Increased prevalence with increased severity of hearing loss
- 31 % in need of accommodation without receiving it
- Increased likelihood
  - Part-time workers
  - Seniority >8 years
  - Sick-leave >8 weeks last 12 months
  - Low workability score

# Trajectories and phases of acknowledgement

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**Personal**

- Knowledge
- Strategies
- Attitude



**Workplace**

- Oral-aural demands
- Flexibility
- Involvement

**Services**

- Access
- Extent
- Proficiency

# Facilitators in the trajectories

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- ✓ Acknowledging attitude towards hearing loss
- ✓ Shared responsibility for implementing measures
- ✓ Access to a wide range of professionals and to peers
- ✓ High degree of flexibility at work



# Manager experiences

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- Positive inclination and social responsibility
- Hearing loss as a minor difficulty
- Expect the employee to know which measures to take
- Mainly temporary accommodation measures
- Support is not requested

# Implications for rehabilitation

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## WORKPLACE

Fatigue prevention through early measures

Improved access to knowledge

Involving all stakeholders (employee, colleagues, manager)

## SERVICE PROVIDERS

Extended services

Hearing loss knowhow in occupational health services

Vocational enablement protocol for hearing loss

«I put a lot of effort into attending courses – including mindfulness - I attended practically oriented courses regarding assistive devices. I desperately craved something that could help me have a better everyday life. I joined all kinds of Facebook groups to see how other people were trying to cope. The sum of all of that and that I was granted one treatment day per week, as well as receiving physiotherapy – all of that is the reason that I can manage»

Female, 46-55, moderate hearing loss, severe tinnitus