



## ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TRANSPORTATION NOISE EXPOSURE AND HYPERTENSION RISK IN THE FRENCH E3N COHORT

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Exposure to transportation noise seems to be associated with a hypertension (HTA) risk. Few studies have explored this association in Europe and even less in France in a prospective cohort. This is therefore the objective of the present study.

**Methods:** Transportation noise exposure was estimated from two periodic strategic noise maps at the residence of 21,515 women from the French E3N cohort, residing in the Île-de-France or Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes regions between 2000 and 2014. Lden (day-evening-night level) indicator was used for three noise sources: road, railway and aircraft. Incident HTA cases were identified using follow-up questionnaires and validated using drug reimbursement insurance databases.

**Results:** Over the period 2000 to 2014, 85% of women were exposed to at least one transportation noise source and at least 82% of these women were exposed to noise levels

that exceed one of the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

**Conclusions:** A large proportion of the women from the E3N cohort who lived in Île-de-France or Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes during the period 2000-2014 were exposed to noise levels that exceeded WHO guidelines for transportation noise. Results of the study for the association between transportation noise exposure and HTA risk will be presented at the conference.

**Keywords:** *Transportation noise, hypertension, women, epidemiology, France*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently updated guidelines for the management of environmental noise [1]. These guidelines are based on the results of epidemiological studies which have shown associations between exposure to transportation noise and cardiovascular diseases [2] including hypertension (HTA) [3].

Exposure to noise generates stress. Stress can cause an excessive release of stress hormones such as cortisol [4] or catecholamines (adrenaline, dopamine) [5]. This

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excessive release of stress hormones then leads to an increase in blood pressure and heart rate [6]. These in turn promote the development of cerebrovascular risk factors such as HTA.

Few studies in Europe and even fewer in France study the effects on health of environmental noise and several limitations have been identified in existing studies such as for example: short follow-up time, small numbers of participants.

In this context, a research project called BROUHAHA (Association between noise exposure and risk of cardio-metabolic diseases (type 2 diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular diseases)) was set up to deepen the knowledge on the consequences of transportation noise on the health of populations residing in Île-de-France and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.

The present article specifically addresses the exposure of the BROUHAHA population to transportation noise and its association with the risk of HTA.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Study Population

The BROUHAHA study population includes women of the E3N (Epidemiological study in women subscribed to the MGEN, a national health insurance covering mainly teachers) prospective cohort [7] who resided in Île-de-France (IdF) or Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (AuRa) regions over the whole period from 2000 to 2014. E3N cohort involved 98,995 French women aged 40 to 65 at the time of their inclusion in 1990, who were affiliated with the MGEN. Follow-up questionnaires are sent approximately every 2 to 3 years. Since January 1, 2004, for each cohort member, the health insurance plan provided data that included all outpatient reimbursements for health expenditure.

In total, the BROUHAHA study population includes 21,515 women.

### 2.2 Noise exposure assessment

The noise exposure of participants was estimated in three steps:

**Step 1:** Addresses of the participants from the E3N follow-up questionnaires were geocoded with the BD Address<sup>®</sup> geocoder for ArcGIS [8].

**Step 2:** The exposure of participants to transportation noise was estimated at each address using the Strategic Noise

Maps (SNM) elaborated by two French noise observatories (BruitParif for the IdF region and Acoucité for the AuRA region). The SNM represents estimates of transportation noise levels obtained by modeling with average traffic and topographic data and they provide average annual noise levels [9]. The European harmonized indicator  $L_{den}$  (day-evening-night level) was used for each of the three sources of transportation noise (road, railway noise and aircraft noise). The WHO guidelines are 53, 54 and 45 dB(A) for road traffic, railway and aircraft noise respectively [1].

**Step 3:** The average noise exposure values accumulated over different periods for 15 years were obtained by calculating the noise level average of the annual values.

### 2.3 Incidence of HTA

The questionnaires sent to the women included in the E3N cohort collected information on the diagnosis of HTA. A woman was considered as a validated case of HTA if she self-reported and had at least one reimbursement of antihypertensive medication within one year, according to the MGEN medical-administrative database.

### 2.4 Statistical analyses

Exposition to each noise source (road, railway noise and aircraft noise) were expressed as means  $\pm$  standard-deviations (SD) for continuous variables, and as frequency and percentages for categorical variables.

All analyses were performed using the SAS system, version 9.4 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC).

## 3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows number and percentage of women exposed to at least one noise source (road, railway noise or aircraft noise) and to each noise source in the study population in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2014.

Table 2 shows number and percentage of women exposed to noise levels exceeding WHO thresholds among women exposed to noise.

**Table 1.** Number of women exposed to noise in the study population according to Lden indicator (n=21,515)

Noise sources	2000	2005	2010	2014
<b>At least one noise source</b>	18,441 (85.7%)	18,413 (85.6%)	18,461 (85.8%)	18,431 (85.7%)
<b>Road traffic noise</b>	17,740 (82.5%)	17,703 (82.3%)	17,747 (82.5%)	17,718 (82.4%)
<b>Railway noise</b>	8,363 (38.9%)	8,316 (38.7%)	8,400 (39.0%)	8,348 (38.8%)
<b>Aircraft noise</b>	1,680 (7.8%)	1,639 (7.6%)	1,643 (7.6%)	1,636 (7.6%)

**Table 2.** Number of women exposed to noise levels exceeding WHO thresholds

Noise sources	2000	2005	2010	2014
<b>At least one threshold</b>	16121 (87.4%)	15819 (85.9%)	15478 (83.8%)	15144 (82.2%)
<b>Road traffic threshold</b>	15,572 (87.8%)	15,228 (86.0%)	14,844 (83.6%)	14,470 (81.7%)
<b>Railway threshold</b>	2,351 (28.1%)	2,263 (27.2%)	2,182 (26.0%)	2,142 (25.7%)
<b>Aircraft threshold</b>	1,513 (90.1%)	1,480 (90.3%)	1,480 (90.1%)	1,464 (89.5%)

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In total, 85% of the women in this study were exposed to at least one source of noise from 2000 to 2014. Among these women, at least 82% were exposed to a level exceeding the WHO guidelines. The average exceedance of the threshold was  $9.3 \pm 4.8$  dB(A) for road traffic noise,  $6.2 \pm 4.9$  dB(A) for railway noise and  $6.2 \pm 4.1$  dB(A) for aircraft noise over 15 years (2000-2014).

These results improve the current knowledge on women exposure to different transportation noise (road traffic, railway or aircraft) in IdF and AuRA regions. Results of the study for the association between HTA risk and transportation noise exposure will be presented at the conference.

#### 5. CONTRIBUTIONS

Conception and study design: EF, A-SE, LG-A, EC, FM, BV and GS. Project management: AH and EF. Geocoding and assessing participants' noise exposure: KG, AB, MQ,

VG, CD, VJ, BV, PJ, AP-M, AG and FM. Statistical analyses: FA, CP, FM and JL.

AH and EF wrote the manuscript with critical input from all other authors who read and approved the final manuscript.

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## 8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

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