

These questions were asked to members of the autistic community about how they experience sound in everyday life. The answers have been selected from a collection of over 150 responses that I received.

This content is supplied to spark thinking and understanding before and in support of the audio walk itself.

What sounds are most prominent to you when you walk down the street?

"Cars zooming past"

"Big vehicles and loud voices"

"Sirens"

"Car/bike engines! Also buzzing if there's any nearby electricity"

"People talking loudly"

"Motorbikes that make sounds like gunshots"

"Shoes scuffing on the floor, also mumbled talking of pedestrians"

"Other people's conversations, just because you walk past so many people talking so loudly and they all overlap and you can pick out each one."

"Construction work"

"Car honking"

"I think cars and traffic in general because I'm always trying to be aware of that so I don't get hurt, and I know I sometimes miss things visually so I try to listen out for any threats of that nature. Then snippets of conversation, seagulls, the wind, beeping of traffic lights, doors opening and closing."

"Loud noise such as music or sirens, or people passing by talking."

"Road noise, people talking, people walking, birds/animal noise, any sudden noises like sirens"

"People talking, if there are a lot, sounds of high heels and clippy boots, traffic noises/engine sounds, loud music playing from passing cars"

What sounds cause you distress when in a public space?

"Loud sudden bangs"

"Talking sounds from crowds"

"Vroom sound from motorbikes"

"Sirens"

"Tapping, clicking, yawning"

"Overlapping chatter"

"Beeping"

"Motorbike noises that sound like gunshots"

"Really loud music, like at a club, police sirens, crying and screaming hits both sensorially and emotionally"

"Very loud noises so sirens, loud music, people yelling, the sound of motorbikes. I also find it hard to focus on conversations in loud places like cafes or supermarkets, but it doesn't inherently cause me distress. All together though these factors can cause me to become overstimulated and that can lead to a meltdown if I'm not able to leave that space."

"Loud unexpected noises, particularly when they are people shouting, people saying something like my name or something that may mean they're saying hi to me (due to my face blindness I'm often not sure if they are talking to me)"

"Rustling of packets, breathing, mouth noises"

"Loud beeping or alarms distress me, especially if they're continuous, I think my go-to word is 'infernal'"

"The typical, abstract noise of crowds. It's not any meaningful sound, just the massive overall sound that crowds make. It's absolutely overwhelming. Huge traffic makes a similar sound but it doesn't bother me at all."

"Sirens, music in supermarkets (find it really hard to concentrate on what I want to buy), people's voices if they sound in distress, any loud or sudden noises e.g. someone dropping something on the floor"

Are there any sounds that you feel you notice that others don't?

"Nails on phones"

"Smacking sound on someone's lips when they wear sticky lipgloss"

"Constant buzzing of electrical sockets" "Change in air pressure and you hear a weird frequency"

"Machine whirring, buzzing, ringing" "Passerby convos"

"I think I notice the sound of electricity when people don't? I have a story from when I was a teen of going to a family friend's house and being able to hear their cat repellent alarm, which apparently isn't meant to be audible to humans. I also notice a lot of background noises, humming, whirring, whooshing. Even when it's silent I can still hear a sort of ringing in my ears. I prefer listening to music than hearing the background noises."

"Electricity if there are wires overhead or certain kinds of lights, quite often anything but the conversation I'm supposed to be paying attention to"

"My shoes squeaking"

"High pitched whines or whirring, like from the fridge or something, that I think other people hear if they listen, but I hear constantly and I find it hard to tune out"

"Very low talking in languages I understand. My own breaths, heartbeat and blood running. Others' breathing if they are close enough (within a metre). High pitch hissing."

"Lights buzzing, sound of electricity e.g. the sockets in my room when they're on, the sound my fire alarm makes periodically every day (very high pitched buzzing/humming sound that none of my flatmates have ever noticed)"