

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Acoustic stealth awareness: aural detectability judgements in normal-hearing civilians.

Researcher: Matthew Blyth

ERGO number: 23783

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This experiment is part of a PhD project funded by the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine. The ultimate aim of the project is to improve the measures of auditory fitness for duty used in the military to ensure soldiers have sufficient hearing abilities to do their job safely and effectively. The aim of the current project is to investigate acoustic stealth awareness in the military. This refers to the behaviour of soldiers in situations where they must stay aurally undetectable to a nearby enemy.

We currently know very little about the judgements soldiers make about how detectable they are to a nearby enemy. The aim of this experiment is to develop a novel method and learn about the judgements. In future experiments, we wish to understand how hearing impairment affects these judgements.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate because you have normal hearing, normal or correct-to-normal vision and are aged 18-40 years.

What will happen to me if I take part?

First, you will be invited to a screening session to check your eligibility for the study. At the screening session, you will have your hearing and vision checked to check they are within normal limits. This will take place in the Audiology department in building 13 at the University. Then you will fill out a screening questionnaire. If your hearing, vision and questionnaire results show you can participate in the experiment, you will be invited to take part in the main experiment. The experimenter will explain what will happen in the experiment, and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

The main experiment consists of two sessions; both of these sessions take part in the small anechoic chamber in building 15. Before starting the experiment, the researcher will explain and show you what will happen during the experiment. The main experiment involves wearing a virtual reality headset, listening to sounds and making a judgement about the sound you heard. Firstly, we will fit the headset so that it is comfortable and you can see clearly. You will then be given instructions about what to do and some practice trials will commence. It will appear as though you are standing in an open grassy field, with another person stood in the distance. You will hear a sound coming from your feet or behind you. You will then make a decision about whether or not you think the other person in the distance could hear that sound and respond via a handheld controller. Once you have given your response, the trial is complete and we will move onto the next trial. We will repeat this process many times, with the total testing time being about 1 hour per session. We will have three breaks during the experiment. In total, the session should take 1.5 hours (including breaks).

Upon completion of the both sessions, you will receive a £60 payment. Importantly, you can withdraw at any time. If you are feeling uncomfortable or no longer wish to participate, you can let the experimenter know and we will finish the session.

If there is space available, you will be invited to attend a third session. If you take part and complete a third session, an additional £30 will be paid.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There are two benefits to taking part in this study. Firstly, you will receive £60 for completing the experiment. Secondly, you will help progress our understanding of the judgements people make in stealthy situations.

Are there any risks involved?

There is a small risk that you might find the virtual reality headset uncomfortable. If this is the case, we can immediately cease the experiment and, usually, the discomfort will go away very quickly. The virtual reality headset has recently been used for another study using the same techniques and visual environments, and no participants experienced any discomfort.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation in the experiment will not be entirely anonymised because you will meet a member of the research team. However, all your data (including questionnaires) will be labelled with a unique ID number only, not your name. Only the research team have access to the key that links your unique ID number to your name. This is called linked-anonymity and is common in university research. Your data will be held in compliance with the Data Protection Act and University Policy. Your data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years.

What should I do if I want to take part?

Please get in contact with Matthew Blyth (M.Blyth@soton.ac.uk) or Daniel Rowan (dr@isvr.soton.ac.uk) if you wish to participate in the study.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw at any time without your rights being affected. Should you withdraw, your data will be destroyed and not used in the analysis.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. The results will be analysed and used to inform future experiments. The results will be written up in a PhD thesis and will likely be published in a peer-reviewed journal. Your anonymised data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years and other researchers will have access to it. Note there will be no way of linking your name to the data when stored in the university repository.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact Matthew Blyth (M.Blyth@soton.ac.uk) or Daniel Rowan (dr@isvr.soton.ac.uk) via email.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk). They are not part of the research team.

Thank you.

