

THE WAVELENGTHS STUDY

Understanding the
impact of listening to
a new podcast, *On the
Same Wavelength*, on
stigma

Elise Carrotte, PhD Candidate
Dr Chris Groot
Dr Michelle Blanchard
Dr Fincina Hopgood
Prof Lisa Phillips

A collaboration between the Melbourne
School of Psychological Sciences and SANE

About the podcast

On the Same Wavelength is a new six-episode podcast focusing on how we can improve outcomes for people living with complex mental health conditions in Australia. Each episode, you will hear from SANE Peer Ambassadors, who share their stories – what goes right, and what goes wrong – helping us get on the same wavelength. Their stories are honest, confronting, but hopeful.

On the Same Wavelength was launched to the public on July 20, 2023. Episodes are available to stream on sane.org, or via Apple, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and all other major podcast apps.

The research behind the podcast

On the Same Wavelength was produced as part of a PhD Study that is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, and SANE, Australia's leading national mental health organisation for people with complex mental health needs, with the support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

The podcast was co-designed with people with lived experience of complex mental health issues, people with an interest in workplace mental health, healthcare professionals, and media professionals. The co-design process informed the focus and storyboard of episodes, and various content principles including the podcast's tone, topics, and logo.

The design of the podcast was also informed by the findings of the National Stigma Report Card project, plus an online survey of over 600 Australian podcast listeners.

Aim

We wanted to understand the impact of listening to this new podcast.

This study explored whether listening to On the Same Wavelength influences listeners' attitudes, discriminatory intentions, and degree of empathy towards people living with complex mental health issues.



Panel discussion at the podcast launch event, The Dax Centre, July 2023. L-R Anu Dhingra (SANE), Elise Carrotte (podcast host/PhD Candidate), and Peer Ambassadors Sandy, Evan and Jeanette.

Methodology

We conducted a randomised controlled trial between February–April 2023.

Participants completed a set of questionnaires on the survey platform, RedCap. They were asked questions about attitudes and behavioural intentions towards people living with complex mental health issues.

Participants completed these questions before and after listening to three podcast episodes, one each week. They listened to either On the Same Wavelength, or a comparison podcast. The comparison podcast was a general interest psychology podcast, PsychTalks, produced by the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences.

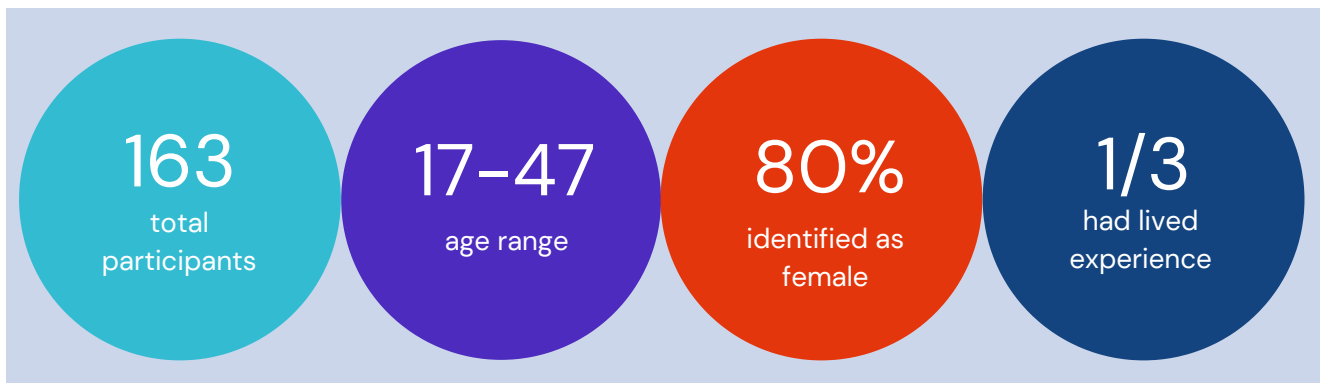
Links to stream each podcast were emailed to participants weekly. Participants also completed questions about their emotional reaction ('state empathy') immediately after listening to the week's episode.

After they listened to all three episodes, participants were asked to provide feedback on the podcast. There were also follow-up questions four weeks later.



Participants

Participants were first-year psychology students recruited from the University of Melbourne.



Key findings

- 1 After the experiment, people who listened to On the Same Wavelength experienced a significant improvement in prejudicial attitudes compared to people who listened to the comparison podcast. However, this wasn't maintained after the four-week follow-up period.
- 2 We found no significant differences for measures of tolerant attitudes or discriminatory intentions.
- 3 People who listened to On the Same Wavelength reported experiencing significantly more empathy compared to those who listened to the comparison podcast. However, participants reported a similar level of empathy for some of the episodes of the comparison podcast.
- 4 Feedback for On the Same Wavelength was generally very positive. Some of our feedback questions are presented below:

Percentage of participants agreeing with feedback questions



So what?

On the Same Wavelength shows promise for improving attitudes towards people living with complex mental health issues, at least in the short term. Listeners generally found the podcast trustworthy and impactful.

However, we only worked with university students, who generally had positive attitudes already at the start of the study. This suggests we need more research around the impact of the podcast, with different audiences.

We plan to publish these findings in a peer-reviewed journal.

The study team wish to give heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in The Wavelengths Study. For more information about the study, please contact Elise Carrotte through elise.carrotte@student.unimelb.edu.au

“ I feel like the podcast can be a very influential tool in dismantling mental health stigma. ”
On the Same Wavelength listener