

Men beat women at identifying noises

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Monday August 9, 2004

Reprinted from *The Guardian*

Derided for their pathological inability to listen, particularly to words such as "commitment" and "washing-up", men are actually better at hearing and identifying everyday noises than women, according to new research.

Even more remarkably, a greater number of men correctly identified the sounds of a number of different household chores in the tests, suggesting a closer familiarity with cleaning and tidying the home than many women might expect.

In tests carried out by Dolby Laboratories, in which people had to identify common sounds emanating from different directions, men beat the women by two to one, with 60% of the tests won by men compared with 28% by women. Twelve per cent of tests were drawn.

While 16% of women identified the sound of a toilet flushing, 40% of men instantly recognised the noise. One in five men identified the clattering of pots and pans compared with 4% of women. And 94% of men recognised the sound of a vacuum cleaner, which almost a quarter of women failed to identify.

In tests to see how its "surround sound" technology is experienced, Dolby found that 81% of the different sounds' directions were correctly identified by both sexes.

"Women are said to multitask better than men," said Robin Dyer of Dolby. "However, our research seems to have discovered that when it comes to listening to multiple sounds from multiple directions, men have the significant edge."

Age, too, appears to be a factor in recognising certain sounds. Hearing the sound of a slamming door, 38% of teenagers correctly identified the noise, compared with 17% of those aged over 40.

But teenagers were less adept at identifying more old-fashioned noises. While 100% of over-20s correctly recognised the sound of a bicycle bell when it was the only noise played during a test, 12% of teenagers could not identify it.