

Survey: A third of Americans over 50 with hearing loss say it affects their mental health

hearinghealthmatters.org
October 17, 2023

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS – A year after the introduction of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids for Americans with mild to moderate hearing loss, a significant knowledge gap persists regarding the potential health consequences of untreated hearing loss, according to a new survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Lexie Hearing.

The survey, which was released today, involved more than 1,000 adults aged 50 and older in the United States and was conducted nearly a year after the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made OTC hearing aids available.

Despite 64% of respondents reporting hearing difficulties, the survey revealed that only 14% have experimented with hearing aids, and nearly 25% have never undergone a formal hearing test.

Of particular concern is the fact that a quarter of those aged 50 and over do not recognize the potential impact of hearing loss on their overall health. Individuals experiencing hearing difficulties reported a range of adverse effects, including:

- 55% say it negatively affects their ability to enjoy entertainment;
- 42% say it negatively affects their social life;
- 40% say it negatively affects their personal relationships;
- 32% say that it negatively affects their mental health; and
- 31% say it negatively affects their ability to conduct day-to-day activities.

Just under half of those who have experienced hearing difficulty (46%) say that other people

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Join us on November 9 for our monthly social meeting

Join our friendly monthly meeting at the Los Altos Hof's Hut. We've reserved space on the patio, away from street noise.

Bring your news, questions, or concerns about hearing loss, or just come to eat and visit. We hope to see you!

4:00 pm, Thursday, November 9

Hof's Hut, 2147 Bellflower Blvd., LB

Free parking in the lot behind the restaurant



Last month's chapter social gathering at Hof's Hut

Chapter Calendar

November 9 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof's Hut

November 15 at Noon

Board meeting on Zoom

December 14 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof's Hut

December 20 at Noon

Board meeting on Zoom

Lip reading practice: Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Weingart Center.

Register for Zoom meetings from
our sister HCAA chapters

HLAA Peninsula Chapter

Lip Reading Strategies to Improve Access to Communication

Monday, November 6, 1:30 pm

Chelle Wyatt and Julia Stepp from Hearing Loss LIVE! will share lip reading strategies.

It is a myth that lipreading is all about lip shapes. Lip shapes are only one of the tools. There are several other strategies that those of us with hearing loss use daily life to 'hear'. We all unknowingly lipread to some degree, naturally and out of necessity. Once the strategies are brought to light, people are able to maximize the benefits. Use these strategies shared by Hearing Loss LIVE! to improve access to communication which also helps build confidence and strengthens our self advocacy muscles."

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

HLAA Mission Viejo Chapter

Holiday Trips and Tricks for Those with Hearing Loss

Friday, November 17, 2:00 pm

Create a hearing loss-friendly environment.

Presenter: Gabriela Rodrigues, AuD., CCC-A
Of Amazing Hearing, Laguna Hills

Dr. Rodrigues received her Doctor of Audiology degree from Texas Tech Health Science Center and her Bachelor's of Science in communication disorders from New Mexico State University.

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

HLAA Los Angeles Chapter

Tinnitus Therapy Options: the Latest Update

Saturday, November 18, 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Do you struggle with tinnitus and want to learn the latest about how to better manage or at least mitigate its effects? Dr. Sharzad Cohen, Au.D., will present and review all available tinnitus therapy options and spend time explaining the newest therapy options that have become available since her last presentation for the group.

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from **Gail Morrison**

Don't fall behind!

Autumn began at the end of September. I wonder how many of you have heard that word: Autumn?

Perhaps "Fall" is the word that brings vibrant memories - when the leaves fall to the ground in colorful shades of gold, yellow, orange and red! Fall is my favorite season and not because of Halloween, although seeing little kids in costumes is such a treat! Yet, Fall is a word to be taken seriously in hopes that our Chapter doesn't fall behind. Our Board is busy with ideas to put into action the good works that everyone needs. We are at work to provide the help available for people with hearing loss.

What is your need? Do you need information on purchasing hearing aids? Help with hearing aids now that you have them? Tips for tinnitus? Are you wondering about cochlear implants? Technology for captions on smart phones and meetings? Lip Reading? Zoom? Devices to help you hear in the car, or hear the doorbell or alarm clock?

These are just a few of the areas where we need help to hear. To be able to participate in life! We have all of that covered and at your disposal and are working for you to hear! Don't fall behind. Until we can meet again at the Weingart Center in Lakewood, join us at Hof's Hut to learn all of these and more. Stay connected: Don't fall behind! Fall in with us!



hearing loss survey

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don't understand how much hearing loss has impacted their lives.

De Wet Swanepoel, Professor of Audiology and Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Audiology, emphasized, "Education continues to be a major barrier in improving widespread hearing health, with an average of seven years elapsing between first experiencing hearing loss and purchasing a hearing aid."

Lack of Awareness about Hearing Health

Despite increasing efforts by advocates to raise awareness about hearing health, 25% of Americans aged 50 and over still do not acknowledge the potential health implications of hearing loss, and only 38% express concern about hearing loss as they age.

Instead, respondents indicated they are more concerned with other signs of aging, including eyesight decline (59%), the diagnosis of serious health conditions (53%), cognitive health decline (48%), loss of balance (i.e., falling) (48%), and weight gain (40%).

Last year's introduction of OTC hearing aids provided a valuable opportunity for the 44 million Americans living with untreated hearing loss to gain increased access to FDA-cleared hearing aids. However, many people continue to rely on medical professionals to initiate discussions about hearing issues.

The study found that 27% of people who report having difficulty hearing have refrained from getting a hearing aid because their doctor hasn't told them they need them, even though hearing aids no longer require a prescription.

"Until last year, people had to go through a hearing health provider for hearing care," said Nic Klopper, CEO of Lexie Hearing. "But now, innovation in hearing aids puts the control in the hands of all Americans who experience mild to moderate hearing loss. Today, people can walk into one of 14,000 stores nationwide and for under a \$1,000 get back to better hearing the same day."

Despite increased accessibility and affordability of hearing aids, misperceptions about costs, effectiveness, and availability persist among consumers. For example:

- 28% of U.S. adults 50+ say they are not planning to purchase OTC hearing aids because they don't trust the quality despite a growing body of clinical evidence to the contrary.
- More than half (51%) falsely believe or are not sure if a prescription is required to purchase hearing aids, even though OTC hearing aids have been available at retail and pharmacy stores across the U.S. for a full year.
- Among those diagnosed with hearing loss, 33% say they don't have hearing aids because they are too expensive, perhaps not realizing that FDA-cleared OTC hearing aids are less than a quarter the cost of prescription devices. And increasingly, health plans, including Medicare Advantage, are adding hearing aid coverage benefits.

Survey Methodology:

The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Lexie Hearing among 1,012 U.S. adults aged 50+. The survey was conducted from September 19-25, 2023.

Data are weighted where necessary by age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 4.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most

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The hearing husband speaks

Gael Hannan, hearinghealthmatters.org
October 17, 2023



I frequently write about Doug, aka the Hearing Husband, because he's the most important relationship in my life, the person I spend the most time with. He is both my major support team and the leader of the opposition.

I'm sure this is typical for most intimate relationships, many of which must deal with one or both people living with a disability. In ours, it's my profound hearing loss. (He also has a profound listening problem, but that's another story.)

Ten years ago, I wrote an article, *What the Hearing Husband Really Thinks*. The initial interview didn't go so well, showcasing that this is a sensitive issue. And that remains true today because hearing loss affects communication which is the cornerstone of any relationship.

So, a decade later, here's an edited version of the original article.

"You want me to *WHAT?*" he asked.

I tried again. *"For this week's blog, I would like you to answer some questions about what it's really like being married to a woman with hearing loss."*

He thinks a moment. "No."

"Why not!?"

"Because my gut tells me this won't go well. When people say what they really think, shit can hit the fan."

"The fact you just said that tells me there are issues that need to be aired. C'mon, it will be fun – we've talked about this stuff before."

"No. Write about something else."

"OK, what if I promise, that no matter what you say, I won't punch you in the face or move to separate beds."

He sighs, which is as close to a 'yes' as I'm going to get.

"OK, thanks honey. Here's a list of questions that you can think about and then give me the answers on paper. That way you won't have to look me in the eye when you say stuff you think might upset me. Which it won't, I promise."

Before heading off with the questions, the Hearing Husband looks at me as if for the last time – as if our relationship is about to take a sharp turn over a road of hot coals or cold thumbtacks.

When you first met me, did my hearing loss give you any concerns about going forward with our relationship? (Give examples and don't mention that we worked together.)

On the contrary, that was part of who you were. I thought that someone who had such a fun personality and did well in spite of her hearing loss was going to handle life's other challenges too, and therefore be a great partner going forward. I was right! But I can imagine that it would be hard for couples when hearing loss occurs later in their relationship.

You proposed to me when I wasn't quite awake and didn't have my hearing aids in. Did you:

a) Plan this as a practice round, hoping that I wouldn't open my eyes when I did?

b) Forget that I was hard of hearing?

c) Hope that I wouldn't speechread you correctly and would answer 'no', thereby letting you off the hook?

None of those quite fit. You're an excellent

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hearing husband

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speechreader. I'd wanted to ask you the night before and I was running out of opportunities and nerve. I remember looking at you for 15 minutes or so, saying it over and over; it was a relief when you finally opened your eyes and could see what I was saying!

What are the major challenges in this relationship with hearing loss?

Losing sight of the puck when the captioning covers it during a TV hockey game. (And this is not a minor thing, I love watching hockey!) Truthfully, the biggest challenge is making sure our time with friends and family is accessible for you, because of your great love for conversation. Sometimes I just leave it up too much to you, to ensure the environment is right.

[Me: "C'mon, how about when I get huffy based on what I thought I heard you say?"

Him: "Minor stuff."]

After 25 years, would you say that you are more, or less, patient with my hearing loss?

More patient. 25 years mellows you a lot.

How would you rate yourself as a hearing partner? Give examples.

This question is a setup! I will say only that how you score me is what counts. We're still together after 25 years – you want more backup than that?

If you could change anything about our relationship with hearing loss, what would it be?

Not a thing about you, but I get frustrated with myself when I forget to face you or walk away while talking. And when you get visibly irritated when I repeat something while over-enunciating.

Any additional comments?

I love you – ok, are we done?

What was he worried about? Hearing loss touches every family differently; some couples crack under the strain, but we're lucky because the Hearing Loss Woman and the Hearing Husband are only two of the names we go by....

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/better-hearing-consumer/2023/the-hearing-husband-speaks/>

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often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

For additional information about Lexie Hearing or to access a free hearing test, please visit www.lexiehearing.com.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearing-news-watch/2023/mental-health-hearing-loss/>



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Join HLAA to become part of the one organization that represents the interests of 48 million people with hearing loss in the U. S., providing information, education, support and advocacy to people with hearing loss.

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Or call for more information: (301) 657-2248

For more information about our chapter, visit hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Questions? Contact us!

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