

Hearing Loss Statistics*

Approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss.

- Men more likely to experience hearing loss than women.
- Of adults ages 65 and older in the United States, 25 million Americans have experienced tinnitus.
- Strong relationship between age and reported hearing loss: 18 percent of American adults 45-64 years old, 30 percent of adults 65-74 years old, and 47 percent of adults 75 years old or older have a hearing impairment.
- About 2 to 3 out of every 1,000 children in the United States born deaf or hard-of-hearing. Nine out of every 10 children born deaf are born to parents who can hear.
- The [National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders](#) estimates that about 15% (26 million) of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities.
- Only 1 out of 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one.
- More than 112,000 people worldwide have received [cochlear implants](#). In the United States, roughly 23,000 adults and 15,500 children have received them.
- Approximately 4,000 new cases of sudden deafness occur each year in the US. Hearing loss affects only 1 ear in 9 out of 10 people who experience sudden deafness. Only 10 to 15 percent of patients with sudden deafness know what caused their loss.

(*Sources: *National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2008.*)

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT STATISTICS ABOUT THE DEGREE OF HEARING LOSS, AND THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS?

For those with gradual hearing loss, there tends to be a period of minimization and outright denial. As the hearing loss begins to have a greater impact on their lives, many, if not most, people with hearing loss tend to self-isolate, gradually and unnoticeably withdrawing from activities and people, where their hearing loss has become a barrier to communication.

In addition, hearing loss is much more subjective than, say, someone who is a paraplegic and needs a wheelchair to maneuver. So, Johns Hopkins* set up some criteria to objectively measure hearing loss. Using a large base of actual audiograms from a random sample of American adults allowed the researchers to precisely define what is meant by hearing loss and to use hard data rather than self-reports, which, by and large, tended to grossly understate the problem.

The criterion used for this study was:

- ***bilateral hearing loss averaging 25 dB or greater*** in the four frequencies important for the understanding of human speech.

This is the widely accepted definition of the ***point at which a hearing loss begins to interfere significantly with the ability to understand speech***, and is therefore "handicapping" rather than merely inconvenient. (Most states also accept that as the ***threshold for providing workers compensation payments*** if the loss occurs as a result of workplace noise exposure).

What the survey showed was that:

- **7.8 %** of the population **20-69** has a handicapping hearing loss. Prevalence of loss sharply correlated with age.
- Ages of **20-29**, only **six-tenths of one percent** of adults has a handicapping loss.
- Increases to **2%** from **30-39**, **5.8** in the **40-49** age cohort.
- **15 %** for the **50-59** cohort.
- **31 %** on the **60-69** bracket.

[Indicates that the prevalence of hearing loss continues to increase as people age beyond 70.]

*(*Johns Hopkins, Archives of Internal Medicine, July, 2008.)*