



The power to make it better.®

The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members

December 2011



The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members

**Data Collected by Crux Research, Inc.
Report Prepared by Teresa A. Keenan, Ph.D.**

©Copyright 2011

**AARP
Research & Strategic Analysis
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
<http://research.aarp.org>
Reprinting with Permission**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.1 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's millions of members and Americans 50+; AARP VIVA, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The views expressed herein are for information, debate, and discussion, and do not necessarily represent official policies of AARP.

Acknowledgements

This work was done as part of a joint initiative between AARP and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The author would like to thank Reginald Ray at AARP Services, Inc. and Joseph Cerquone at ASHA who served as project directors. She would also like to thank John Geraci and the staff at Crux Research, Inc. for drafting and fielding the survey, collecting and tabulating the data, and preparing a high-level report of the findings upon which this longer report is based. Additional thanks go to Michael Schuster for legal review and to Jennifer Leslie and Lisa Costello for prepping the report for publication. For additional information, contact Teresa Keenan at (202) 434-6274.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background	2
Detailed Findings	3
Attitudes toward Hearing Health	3
Importance of Hearing Health	5
Current Hearing Health	6
Current Hearing Issues	7
Receipt of Health Screenings in Past Five Years	10
Attitude about Their Age	12
Ownership of Hearing Aids and Other Hearing Assistive Technologies	12
Quality of Hearing with Hearing Aids	12
Satisfaction and Use of Hearing Aids	12
Critical Issues in Seeking Help	14
Sources of Information	16
Barriers to Seeking Help for a Hearing Issue	18
Opinions about Hearing-Related Statements	20
Respondents with a Family Member or Friend with Hearing Issues	24
Respondents with Hearing Difficulties	25
Summary	28
Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	29
Appendix B: Annotated Questionnaire	31

List of Figures

Figure 1: In your experience, does the importance of getting a regular hearing check-up get...?	4
Figure 2: As you age, how important is maintaining your hearing health to the quality of your life?	5
Figure 3: Which best describes your own hearing health?	6
Figure 4: Which of the following statements are true for you?	8
Figure 5: Which have you had in the past five years?	10
Figure 6: Why are you less than fully satisfied with your hearing aids?	13
Figure 7: Which of the following would be critically important to you if you were to seek help for a hearing issue?	14
Figure 8: Whom would you be likely to talk to if you had an issue with your hearing health?	16
Figure 9: If you felt you had an issue with your hearing health, where would you look for information?	17
Figure 10: Which of the following might prevent you from getting help for a hearing issue?	18
Figure 11: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	20
Figure 12: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? <i>I would be more likely to seek treatment for a hearing issue if...</i>	22
Figure 13: What have you suggested a person with a hearing issue do?	24
Figure 14: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about hearing loss?	26

List of Tables

Table 1: Importance of Hearing Health	3
Table 2: Current Hearing Issues	9
Table 3: Health Screenings Obtained in Past Five Years	11
Table 4: Critically Important Issues in Seeking Help	15
Table 5: Potential Barriers to Seeking Help for a Hearing Issue	19
Table 6: Agreement with Hearing-Related Statements	21
Table 7: Agreement with Statements about Seeking Treatment	23
Table 8: Agreement with Statements about Hearing Loss	27

Executive Summary

As part of a joint initiative between AARP and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Crux Research, Inc. of Honeoye Falls, New York fielded a short survey in September 2011 among a sample of 2, 232 AARP members ages 50 and older to learn more about the state of hearing health among the 50+ U.S. population.

Key Findings

Hearing health is clearly an important concern, with roughly three-quarters of respondents saying it is an *extremely* or *very important* concern for themselves and other adults ages 50 and older and slightly fewer seeing it as an *extremely* or *important concern* for their friends and family members. Additionally, more than eight in ten respondents reported that their hearing health is *extremely* or *very important* to them in maintaining their quality of life and about two-thirds of respondents noted that getting regular hearing check-ups gets *insufficient attention* in comparison to other health issues.

But, about half of the respondents reported having untreated hearing issues, including the one-third of respondents who believe their hearing is not as good as it should be, but do not believe it needs to be treated. Similarly, among the barriers cited in seeking help for a hearing issue, more than one-third of respondents noted their belief that minor hearing issues are easy enough to live with untreated.

In a separate question, respondents noted similar barriers to treatment, including the belief that their hearing is “good enough,” fine in some situations and not in need of treatment, or that unless their hearing difficulties are severe, they will not seek treatment, or that it is easy to find ways to cover up some hearing difficulty.

Notably, cost concerns also rose to the top in this discussion of hearing issues, with about three in ten respondents reporting that their health insurance would be insufficient in covering the full cost of treatment or noting that treating hearing issues would be too costly for them.

When it comes to reasons for seeking treatment, however, respondents cited improved quality of life, enhanced mental and physical alertness, and the ability to maintain their independence. Respondents who reported having difficulty hearing also mentioned the negative effect that hearing problems pose for them, including making it harder to follow conversations with friends and family members, causing family gatherings to often be a strain with many people talking at once, and raising concerns about their overall safety.

Background

As part of a joint initiative between AARP and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Crux Research, Inc. of Honeoye Falls, New York fielded a short survey among a sample of AARP members ages 50 and older to learn more about the state of hearing health among the 50+ U.S. population^{1,2}.

Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the issue of hearing health, including the importance of maintaining hearing health, its relationship to quality of life, the likelihood they would obtain a hearing test if they felt they had difficulty hearing, and their confidence in knowing how to seek help for hearing difficulties, if they had them.

In addition, respondents were asked about individuals and other sources of information they might turn to if they had an issue with their hearing health, any perceived barriers they might have in seeking diagnosis or treatment for a hearing issue, and possible drivers for seeking diagnosis or treatment.

Respondents who reported having some hearing difficulties were asked more detailed questions about their experiences, including whether someone had ever suggested they seek professional assistance, who they might have discussed their hearing difficulties with, and whether or not they currently own or use hearing aids or other hearing assistive technologies.

¹ The study was fielded from September 13-26, 2011, using two methodologies: an online survey of 1,821 AARP members and a telephone survey of 411 AARP members. The telephone survey was conducted to provide representation of AARP members who did not have an email address on their membership file. Data collection occurred simultaneously with identical survey instruments. At the conclusion of the fielding period, responses had been received from a total of 2,232 AARP members ages 50 and older. Respondents were selected from the AARP membership list, with data weighted to reflect key demographic characteristics. Since the sample is based on individuals who agreed to participate in the study and is not a true probability sample, estimates of sampling error cannot be calculated.

² Throughout the report, results are presented using weighted data figures.

Detailed Findings

Attitudes Toward Hearing Health

Roughly three-quarters of respondents said they consider hearing health to be an *extremely* or *very important* concern for themselves (76%) and for people aged 50 and older (73%). Slightly fewer (70%) said hearing health is an *extremely* or *very important* concern for their family and friends, but less than half (48%) of the respondents said the same thing for the U.S. population in general.

As noted in Table 1, while there is little gender or age variation in the percentages of respondents who view hearing health as an *extremely* or *very important* concern to themselves and those they were asked about, African American respondents are more likely than Hispanic respondents to consider hearing health as an *extremely* or *very important* concern for themselves, for people age 50 or older, and for their close family members or friends. They are also more likely than white respondents to consider hearing health as an *extremely* or *very important* concern for the U.S. population in general.

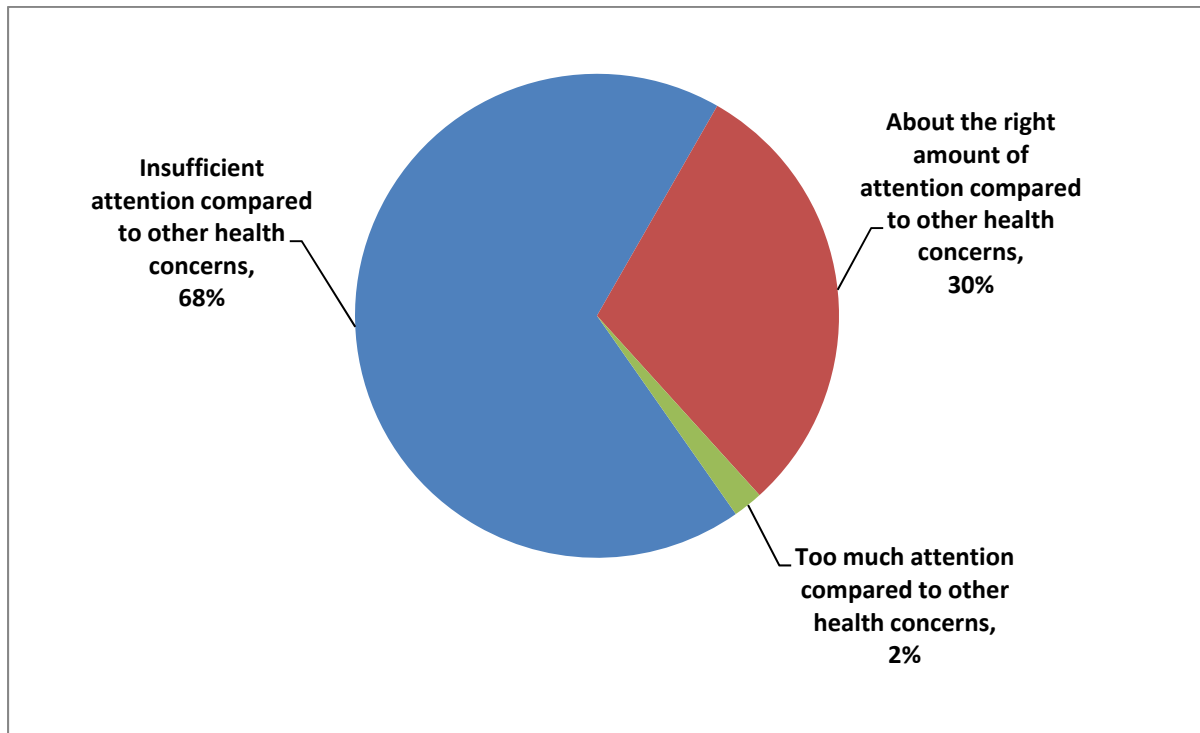
Table 1
Importance of Hearing Health³
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
For you personally	77%	75%	70%	78%^c	78%^c
For people age 50 or older	71%	74%	73%	72%	73%
For your close family members or friends	68%	71%	67%	70%	71%
For the U.S. population in general	46%	50%^b	43%	47%	52%^c
None	13%	14%	14%	13%	13%
	White	Black	Hispanic		
	N=1966	N=182	N=72		
	F	G	H		
For you personally	76%	82%^h	72%		
For people age 50 or older	72%	77%^h	70%		
For your close family members or friends	70%	72%^h	65%		
For the U.S. population in general	47%	57%^f	51%		
None	13%	11%	16%		

³ **How to Read the Table:** Bold face percentages in columns (which represent demographic subgroups) are significantly higher than percentages in adjacent columns. Superscripts (^{a/b, c/d/e, f/g/h}) indicate those columns in which there is a statistically significant difference.

Slightly more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents said that the importance of getting a regular hearing check-up gets *insufficient attention* compared to other health issues, while three in ten (30%) said the topic gets *about the right amount of attention* in comparison to other health issues (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
In your experience, does the importance of getting a regular hearing check-up get...?
(n=2,232)



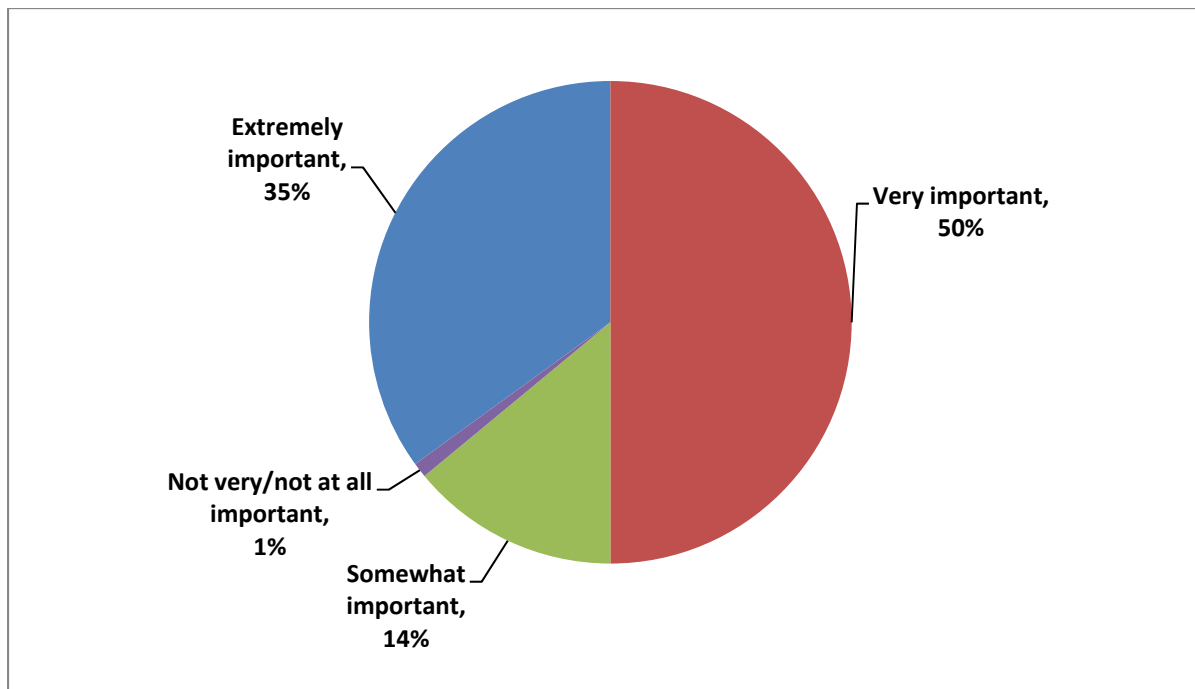
Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

- Women are more likely than men (73% vs. 63%) and respondents ages 50-69 are more likely than those aged 70 and older (73% for those 50-59 and 72% for those 60-69 vs. 60% for those 70+) to say that the importance of getting a regular hearing check-up gets *insufficient attention compared to other health concerns*. In contrast, respondents age 70 and older are more likely than their younger counterparts (37% vs. 25% and 25%) to say that the importance of regular hearing check-ups gets *about the right amount of attention compared to other health concerns*.

Importance of Hearing Health

When asked how important they believe maintaining their hearing health is to their quality of life, a large majority (85%) of respondents reported that it is *extremely* or *very important* to them (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
As you age, how important is maintaining your hearing health to the quality of your life?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

- While there are no age differences in the percentage of respondents who said they consider hearing health to be *extremely important* or *very important* to their quality of life, women are more likely than men (89% vs. 81%) to say so. African American respondents are also more likely than white or Hispanic respondents (92% vs. 84% and 83%) to say that hearing health is *extremely* or *very important* to their quality of life.

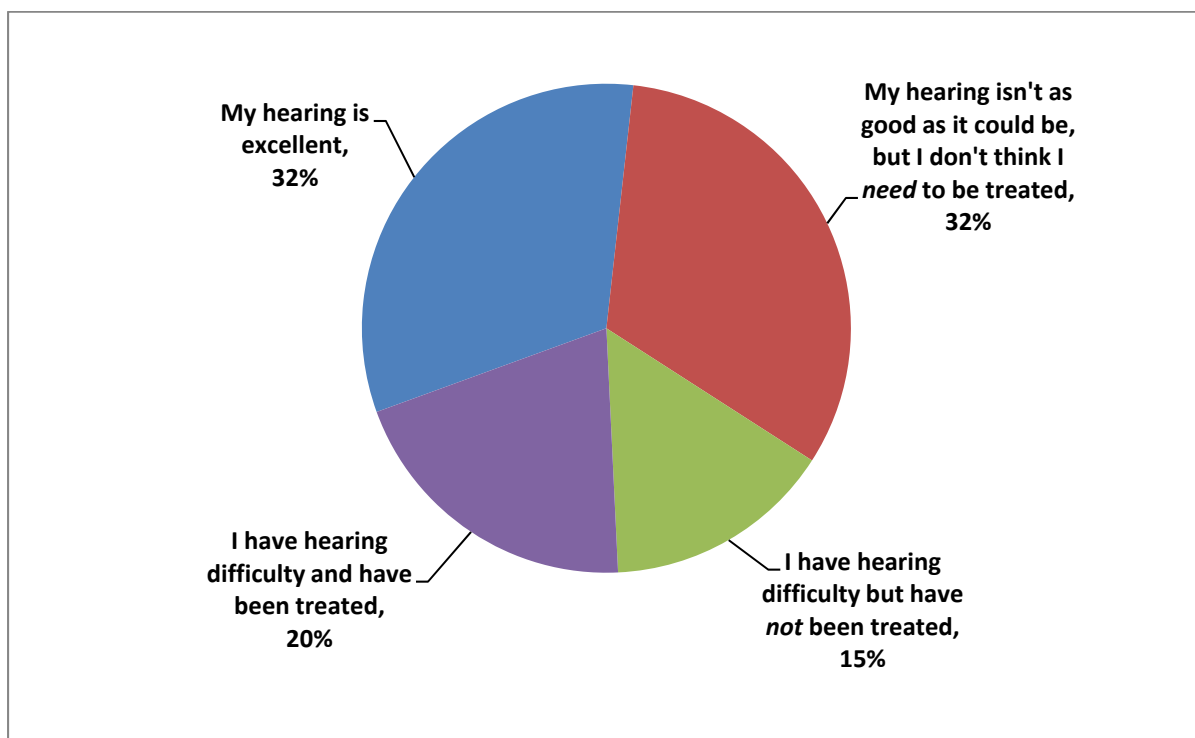
Similarly, when asked how likely they would be to get a hearing check-up if they believed they had an issue with their hearing health, more than eight in ten respondents reported being *extremely likely* (37%) or *very likely* (44%) to do so. However, somewhat fewer—two-thirds—reported being *extremely confident* (26%) or *very confident* (40%) that they would know where to get help if they needed it.

- Respondents ages 70 and older are more likely to report being *extremely* or *very confident* that they would know where to get help (72% vs. 56% and 66%).

Current Hearing Health

Most respondents reported that their hearing is either *excellent* (32%) or *not as good as it could be, but not in need of treatment* (32%) (see Figure 3). One-fifth (20%) said they have *hearing issues that have been treated*, with a similar figure (15%) noting they have *hearing issues that have not been treated*.

Figure 3
Which best describes your own hearing health?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

- Women are more likely than men (40% vs. 26%) and respondents ages 50-59 are more likely than their older counterparts (45% vs. 32% and 26%) to report their hearing as *excellent*. However, respondents ages 70 or older are more likely than those younger than age 70 to report they have *difficulty hearing and have been treated* for it (33% vs. 7% and 15%). African American respondents are more likely to report that their hearing is *excellent* (46% vs. 35% for Hispanics and 31% for whites).

When compared to five years ago, more than half (52%) of the respondents said their hearing is the *same* as it was then, with slightly fewer saying it is either *a little worse* (37%) or *much worse* (9%). Only two percent of respondents said their hearing is either *a little better* (1%) or *much better* (1%) than it was five years ago.

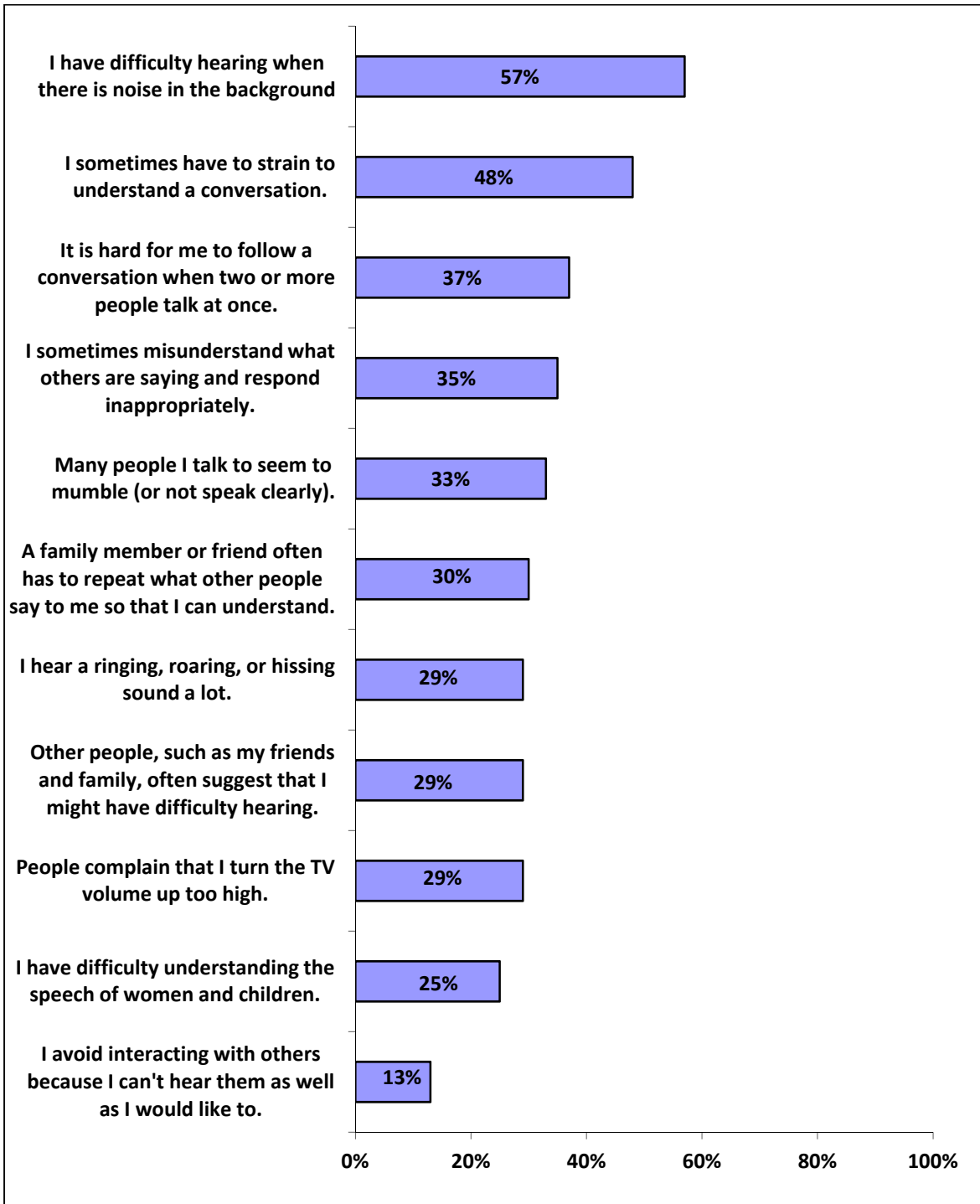
- In terms of demographic differences, men are more likely than women to say that their hearing is either *a little or much worse* (49% vs. 42%) than it was five years ago, but women are more likely to say their hearing is the *same* as it was then (56% vs. 48%). Respondents ages 70 and older are more likely than their younger counterparts to say their hearing is *a little worse or much worse* (51% vs. 37% and 45%) than it was five years ago.

Current Hearing Issues

Nearly six in ten (57%) respondents reported that they have difficulty hearing when there is noise in the background (see Figure 4). Further, less than half (48%) noted sometimes having to strain to understand a conversation, while roughly one-third said it is hard for them to follow a conversation when more than one person is speaking at once (37%), sometimes they misunderstand what someone is saying and respond inappropriately (35%), or they find that many people seem to mumble or not speak clearly (33%). Of note, only about one in eight (13%) respondents said that they avoid interacting with others because they can't hear them as well as they would like to.

- As shown in Table 2, men are more likely than women to report having difficulty hearing in all of the eleven situations they were asked about. Additionally, in general, older respondents are more likely than younger ones to report experiencing difficulty hearing in most of the situations they were asked about. Finally, while African Americans appear less likely than white or Hispanic respondents to report having difficulty hearing in many of the situations they were asked about, these results should be considered as merely directional due to the small number of respondents per response category, particularly among African Americans and Hispanics.

Figure 4
Which of the following statements are true for you?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 2
Current Hearing Issues⁴
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

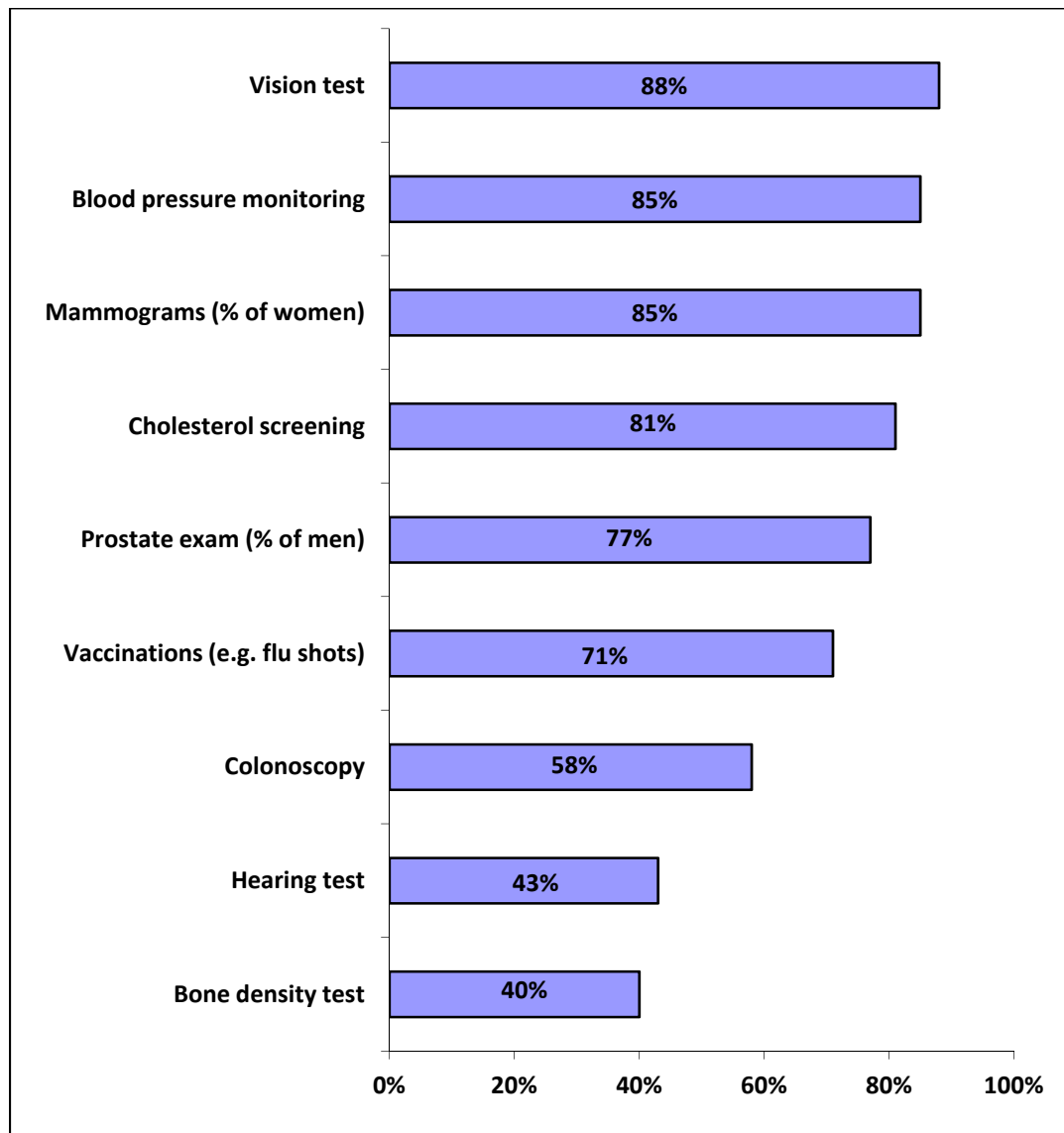
	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
I have difficulty hearing when there is noise in the background	62%^b	51%	49%	56%^c	61%^c
I sometimes have to strain to understand a conversation	54%^b	41%	34%	49%^c	56%^{cd}
It is hard for me to follow a conversation when two or more people talk at once	42%^b	32%	24%	35%^c	47%^{cd}
I sometimes misunderstand what other people are saying and respond inappropriately	41%^b	28%	28%	36%^c	38%^c
Many people I talk to mumble (or not speak clearly)	37%^b	29%	25%	33%^c	39%^{cd}
A family member or friend often has to repeat what other people say	37%^b	22%	21%	28%^c	36%^{cd}
I hear a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound a lot	33%^b	24%	25%	32%^c	29%
Other people, such as my friends, often suggest that I might have difficulty hearing	35%^b	21%	19%	29%^c	34%^c
People complain that I turn the TV volume up too high	34%^b	22%	24%	30%^c	34%^c
I have difficulty understanding the speech of women and children	32%^b	17%	14%	24%^c	32%^{cd}
I avoid interacting with others because I can't hear them as well as I would like to	17%^b	10%	9%	13%	17%^c
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
			F	G	H
I have difficulty hearing when there is noise in the background			57%	48%	58%
I sometimes have to strain to understand a conversation			50%	32%	43%
It is hard for me to follow a conversation when two or more people talk			38%	26%	33%
I sometimes misunderstand what other people are saying and respond inappropriately			36%	29%	34%
Many people I talk to mumble (or not speak clearly)			34%	22%	36%
A family member or friend often has to repeat what other people say			31%	17%	30%
I hear a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound a lot			30%	18%	25%
Other people, such as my friends, often suggest that I might have difficulty hearing			30%	18%	30%
People complain that I turn the TV volume up too high			29%	26%	31%
I have difficulty understanding the speech of women and children			26%	10%	24%
I avoid interacting with others because I can't hear them as well...			14%	4%	12%

⁴ Racial differences cited in the table should be considered as merely directional due to the small number of respondents per response category.

Receipt of Health Screenings in Past Five Years

When it comes to health screenings, nearly nine in ten respondents reported having a vision test (88%) in the past five years, with slightly fewer saying they had their blood pressure (85%) or cholesterol (81%) checked (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
Which have you had in the past five years?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 3
Health Screenings Obtained in Past Five Years
By Gender and Age

	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
Vision test	86%	89%	85%	88%	89%
Blood pressure monitoring	85%	85%	78%	87%^c	88%^c
Mammograms (n=891 women)	-----	85%	41%	42%	37%
Cholesterol screening	82%	81%	77%	85%^c	81%^c
Prostate exam (n=916 men)	77%	-----	37%	42%	43%
Vaccinations	70%	72%	58%	71%^c	79%^{cd}
Colonoscopy	63%^b	54%	53%	64%	57%
Hearing test	49%^b	36%	32%	40%^c	51%^{cd}
Bone density test	17%	66%^a	31%	42%^c	44%^c
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
			F	G	H
Vision test			88%	82%	80%
Blood pressure monitoring			85%	91%	83%
Mammograms (n=891 women)			40%	43%	37%
Cholesterol screening			82%^g	75%	85%^g
Prostate exam (n=916 men)			41%	39%	43%
Vaccinations			73%^{gh}	59%	60%
Colonoscopy			58%	59%	55%
Hearing test			43%	38%	36%
Bone density test			40%	40%	37%

- Men are more likely than women to report having had a colonoscopy (63% vs. 54%) or a hearing test (49% vs. 36%) in the past five years (see Table 3). In contrast, women are far more likely to report having had a bone density test (66% vs. 17%) in the same time period.
- In general, respondents ages 60 or older are more likely than those between 50 and 59 to report having had a number of health screenings, including having their blood pressure and cholesterol checked, having received vaccinations and a colonoscopy, and having had a hearing test and bone density test within the past five years.
- White and Hispanic respondents are more likely than African American ones to report having had cholesterol screening (82% and 85% vs. 75%) in the past five years, while white respondents are more likely than both African American and Hispanic respondents to report having received vaccinations (73% vs. 59% and 60%).

Attitude about Their Age

When asked how they feel about their age, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents said they feel younger than their age, with three in ten (31%) saying they feel about their age.

- While there are no age or racial differences in reported attitudes toward one's age, women are more likely than men to report feeling younger than their age (68% vs. 58%).

Ownership of Hearing Aids and Other Hearing Assistive Technologies

Slightly less than one-fifth (18%) of respondents said they currently own hearing aids. In a separate question, only seven percent of respondents reported using other hearing assistive technologies, such as personal FM systems, infrared system, induction loop systems, one-to-one communicators, amplified telephones, or TV ears.

Quality of Hearing with Hearing Aids

Nearly three-quarters of hearing aid wearers noted that the quality of their hearing has been either *much better* (33%) or *somewhat better* (40%) since they have been wearing hearing aids. Slightly more than one-fifth (23%) said the quality of their hearing has been *about the same*. Only four percent of hearing aid wearers reported the quality of their hearing as *somewhat worse* (3%) or *much worse* (1%) since they have been wearing hearing aids.

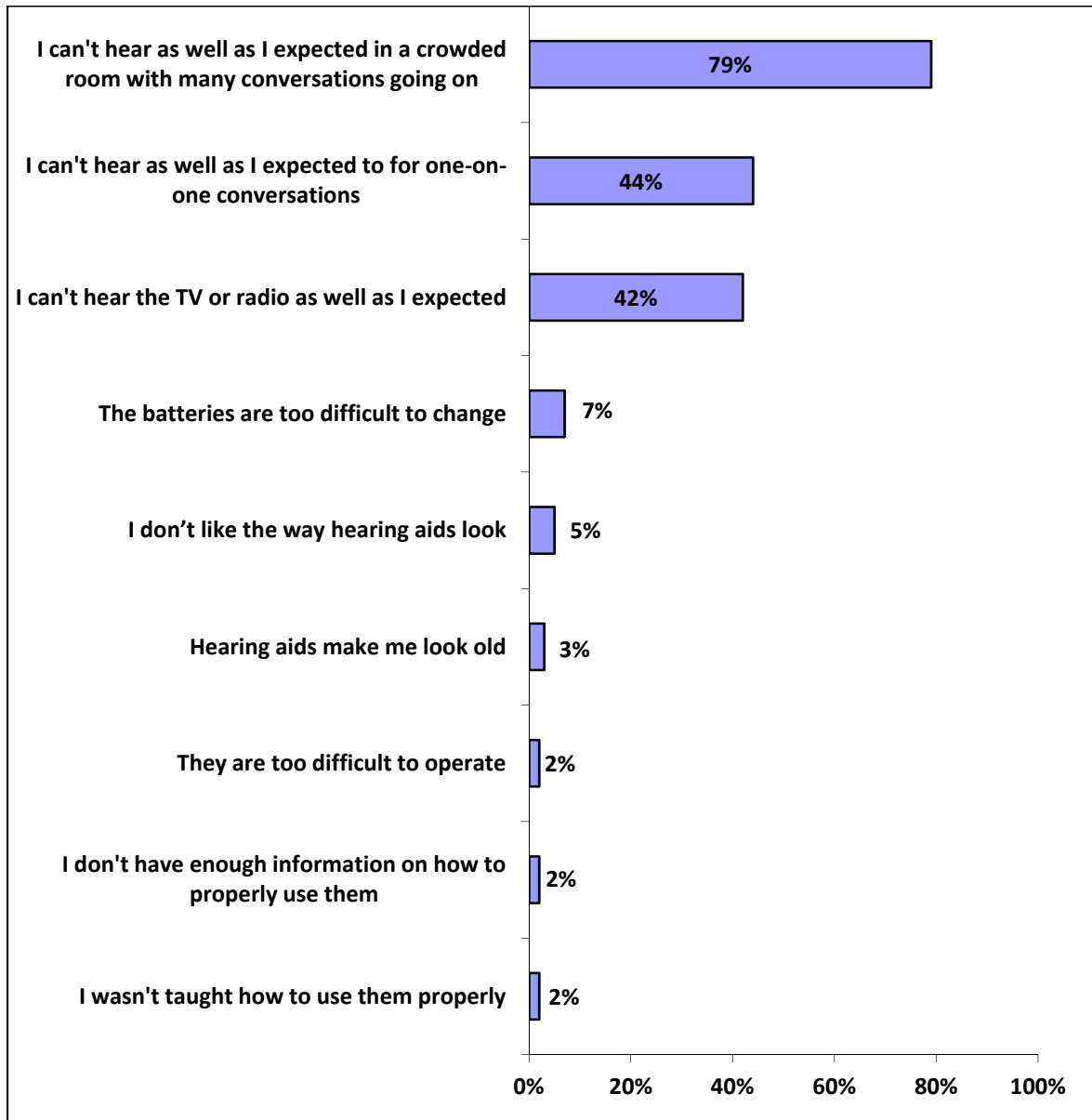
Satisfaction and Use of Hearing Aids

When it comes to satisfaction with their hearing aids, however, only about four in ten hearing aid owners said they are either *extremely satisfied* (8%) or *very satisfied* (34%) with them. Another four in ten (40%) are *somewhat satisfied*, while about one-fifth said they are either *not very satisfied* (13%) or *not at all satisfied* (6%) with their hearing aids.

Among hearing aid wearers, roughly six in ten (61%) said they wear them *during all or most of the time they are awake*. About three in ten (28%) wear them when they *feel they need them*, while one in nine (11%) said they wear them *rarely, if ever*.

When asked why they are less than fully satisfied with their hearing aids, roughly eight in ten (79%) dissatisfied hearing aid wearers said they cannot hear as well as they expected to in a crowded room with many conversations going on (see Figure 6). About half as many said they are dissatisfied because they cannot hear as well as they expected to in one-on-one conversations (44%) or because they cannot hear the television or radio as well as they expected to (42%).

Figure 6
Why are you less than fully satisfied with your hearing aids?
(Asked of those dissatisfied with hearing aids, n=237)

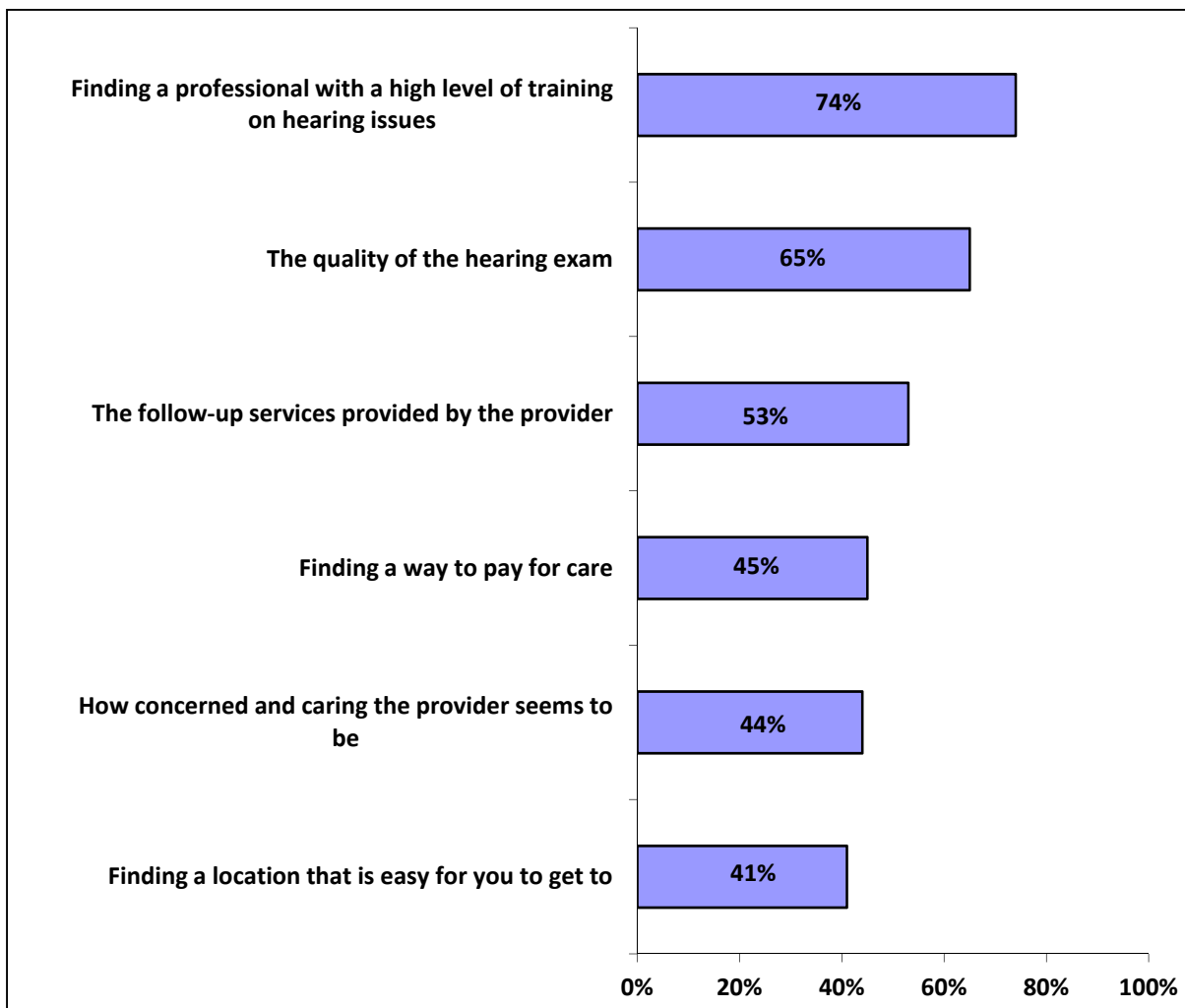


Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Critical Issues in Seeking Help

As shown in Figure 7, roughly three-quarters (74%) of respondents said finding a professional with a high level of training on hearing issues would be critically important if they were to seek help for a hearing issue. About two-thirds (65%) of respondents said the quality of the hearing exam, while about half (53%) said the follow-up services of the provider would be critically important if they were to seek help. Roughly four in ten respondents said that finding a way to pay for care (45%), the concern and caring of the provider (44%), and finding a location that is easy to get to (41%) would be critically important to them.

Figure 7
Which of the following would be critically important to you if you were to seek help for a hearing issue?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 4

**Critically Important Issues in Seeking Help
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group**

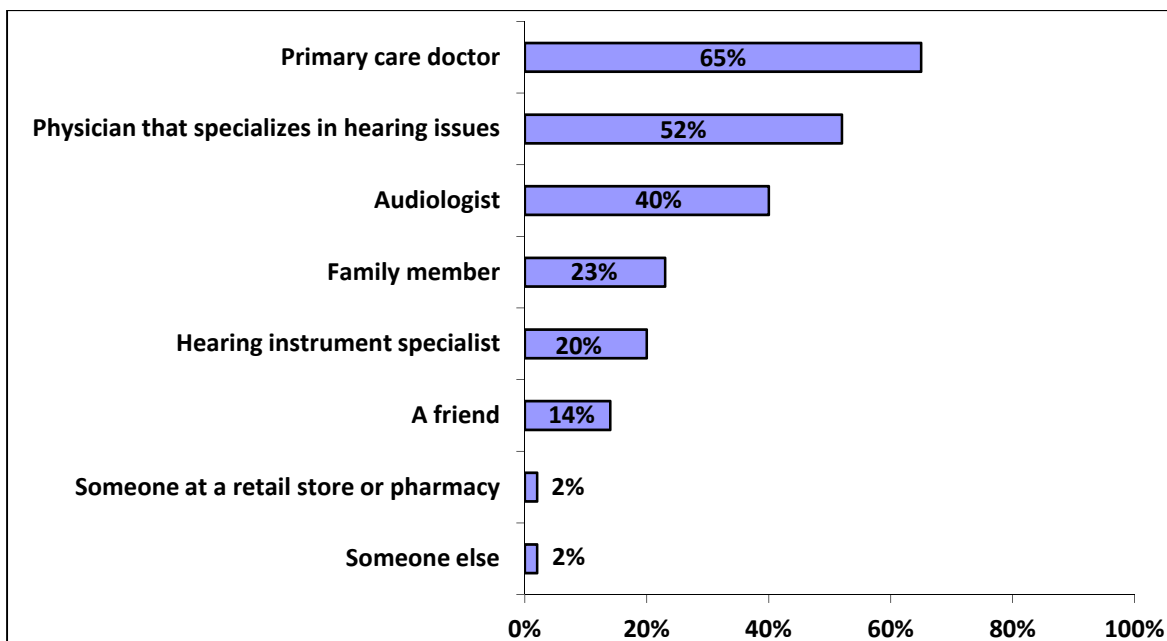
	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
Finding a professional with a high level of training on hearing issues	73%	76%	71%	73%	77%^c
The quality of the hearing exam	65%	64%	59%	67%^c	66%^c
The follow-up services provided by the provider	52%	55%	50%	54%	55%
Finding a way to pay for care	42%	49%^a	49%^e	49%^e	40%
How concerned and caring the provider seems to be	43%	47%^a	42%	48%^c	44%
Finding a location that is easy for you to get to	38%	46%^a	43%	42%	41%
	White	Black	Hispanic		
	N=1966	N=182	N=72		
	F	G	H		
Finding a professional with a high level of training on hearing issues	45%	46%	44%		
The quality of the hearing exam	41%	49%^{fh}	36%		
The follow-up services provided by the provider	75%^{gh}	68%	67%		
Finding a way to pay for care	45%^h	43%	36%		
How concerned and caring the provider seems to be	53%^h	55%	44%		
Finding a location that is easy for you to get to	65%^h	63%	57%		

- Women are more likely than men to consider finding a way to pay for care (49% vs. 42%), the concern and caring of the provider (47% vs. 43%), and finding a location that is easy to get to (46% vs. 38%) as critically important to them if they were seeking help for a hearing issue.
- Older respondents are more likely than younger ones to consider finding a professional with a high level of training (77% of those 70-79 vs. 71% of those 50-59), the quality of the hearing exam (67% and 66% vs. 59%), and how concerned and caring the provider seems to be (48% of those 60-69 vs. 42% of those 50-59) as critically important. Younger respondents are more likely to consider finding a way to pay for care (49% and 49% vs. 40%) as critically important to them.
- White respondents are more likely than Hispanics to consider follow-up services (75% vs. 67%), finding a way to pay for care (45% vs. 36%), the concern and caring of the provider (53% vs. 44%), and finding a location that is easy to get to (65% vs. 57%) as critically important. They are also more likely than African Americans to consider follow-up services (75% vs. 68%) as critically important to them.

Sources of Information

Roughly two-thirds (65%) of respondents said they would speak with their primary care doctor if they believed they had an issue with their hearing health, while half (50%) said they would speak with a physician that specializes in hearing issues and four in ten (40%) said they would turn to an audiologist (see Figure 8). Nearly one-quarter (23%) said they would talk with a family member, one-fifth (20%) said a hearing aid specialist, and about one in eight (14%) said a friend. Only two percent of respondents said they would speak with someone at a retail store or pharmacy, with another two percent mentioning they would speak with someone else.

Figure 8
Whom would you be likely to talk to if you had an issue with your hearing health?
(n=2,232)

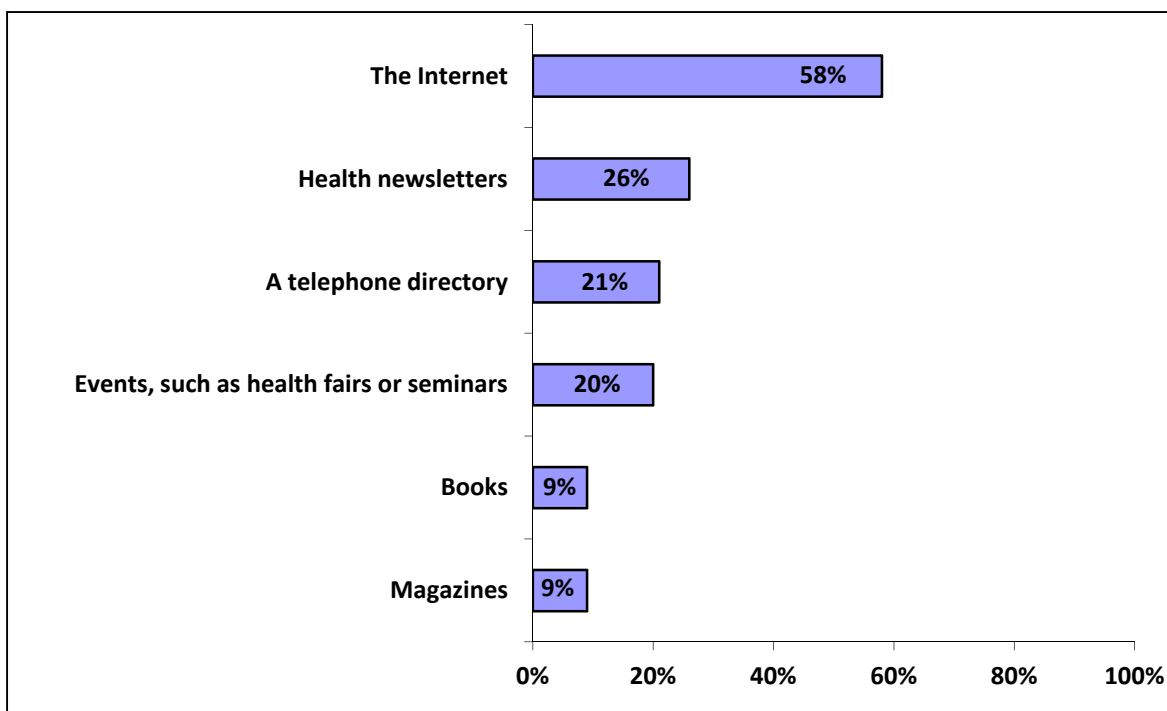


Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

- While there are no gender or racial differences in who respondents said they would turn to if they had difficulty hearing, there are age differences. Notably, respondents ages 50-59 are more likely than those ages 60 and older to report they would talk to their primary care physician if they felt they had difficulty hearing (76% vs. 69% and 56%), while those ages 70 and older are more likely than their younger counterparts to say they would talk with either a hearing aid specialist (25% vs. 14% and 18%) or an audiologist (47% vs. 33% and 37%).

Additionally, about six in ten (58%) respondents said they would look to the Internet for information on hearing health (see Figure 9). Far fewer said they would look at health newsletters (26%), refer to a telephone directory (such as the Yellow Pages) (21%), or go to events such as health fairs or seminars (20%).

Figure 9
If you felt you had an issue with your hearing health, where would you look for information?
(n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

- Women are more likely than men (25% vs. 16%) to report they would look for information about their hearing at events such as health fairs and seminars. Additionally, younger respondents are much more likely than older ones to say they would look for such information on the Internet (73% for 50-59 vs. 64% for 60-69 and 44% for 70+).

When asked what would be the most effective way for a health care provider to communicate with them about the importance of getting their hearing checked, nearly one-quarter said at an event, such as a health fair or seminar (23%) or via ads on a local television station (22%). Slightly fewer (17%) said they could be reached via the Internet, and even fewer said ads in their local newspapers (9%) or ads on the radio (2%) would be effective ways to communicate with them. Notably, nearly three in ten (28%) respondents said none of these options would be effective in reaching them.

- Similar to the question about seeking out information on hearing, women are more likely than men (29% vs. 18%) to say the most effective way for a health care provider to communicate with them about the importance of getting their hearing checked would be at an event, such as a health fair or seminar. But, men are more likely (20% vs. 13%) to say the Internet would be the most effective way to reach them.

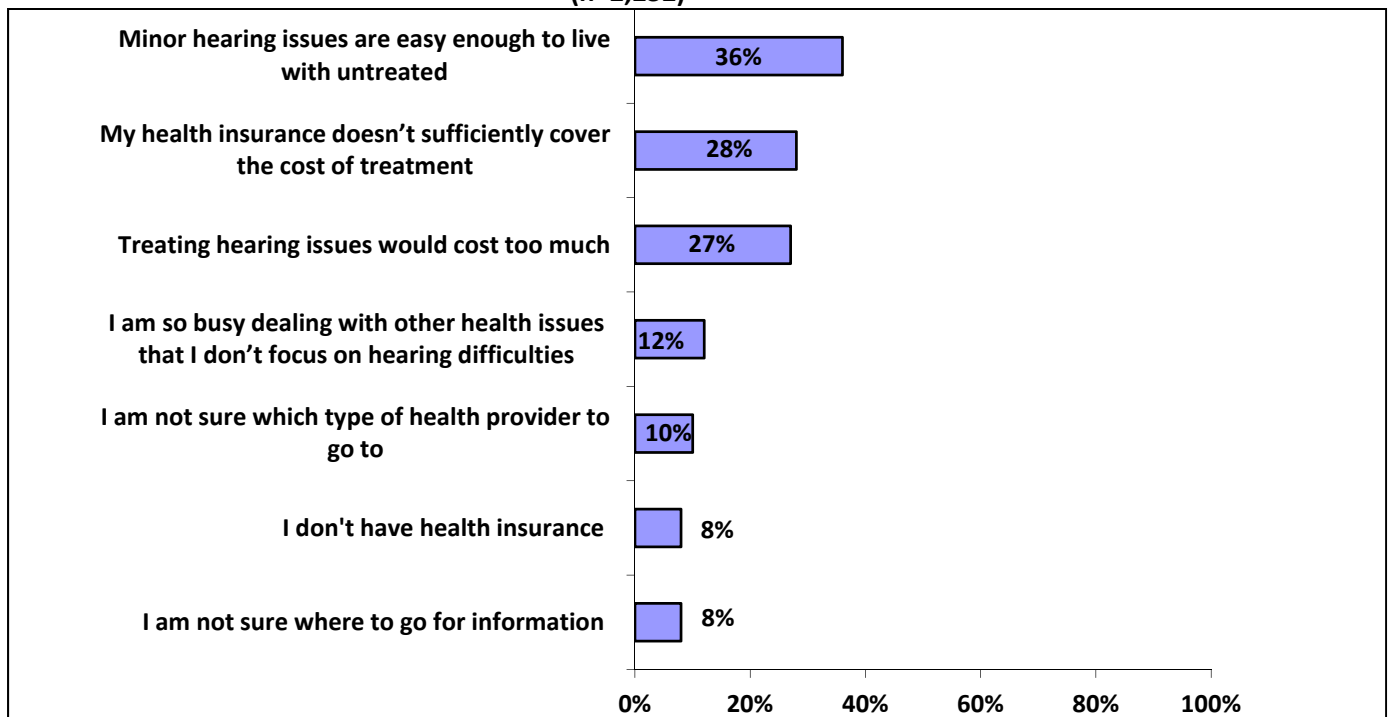
- Respondents ages 50-59 and 60-69 are more likely than those ages 70 or older to say the most effective way for a health care provider to reach them would be via the Internet (20% and 20% vs. 12%). In addition, respondents ages 50-59 are more likely than those ages 70 or older to report that the most effective way for a health care provider to communicate with them would be via advertisements on local television (26% vs. 19%). Finally, respondents ages 70 and older are more likely (27% vs. 19% and 22%) to mention an event as the most effective way to reach them.

Barriers to Seeking Help for a Hearing Issue

When respondents were asked what might prevent them from seeking help if they thought they might have difficulty hearing, more than one-third (36%) said minor issues are easy enough to live with untreated (see Figure 10). Nearly three in ten said cost concerns would prevent them from getting help either because their health insurance doesn't sufficiently cover the cost (28%) or because they believe treatment would be too costly (27%).

Less than one in ten respondents said they didn't think they could keep track of what they need to do to use hearing aids successfully (3%), or they don't have transportation (2%), or they don't think they have the physical ability necessary to use hearing aids successfully (2%) (not shown).

Figure 10
Which of the following might prevent you from getting help for a hearing issue?
 (n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 5
Potential Barriers to Seeking Help for a Hearing Issue
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
Minor hearing issues are easy enough to live with untreated	38%^b	33%	37%	38%	33%
My health insurance doesn't sufficiently cover the cost of treatment	27%	30%	28%	28%	29%
Treating hearing issues would cost too much	27%	27%	26%	28%	26%
I am so busy dealing with other health issues that I don't focus on hearing difficulties	12%	11%	14%	12%	10%
I am not sure which type of health provider to go to	10%	9%	12%	10%	8%
I don't have health insurance	8%	8%	15%^{de}	8%	5%
I am not sure where to go for information	8%	8%	12%^{de}	7%	6%
I don't have transportation	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
I don't think I have the physical ability needed to successfully use a hearing aid	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
I don't think I can keep track of what I need to do to use hearing aids successfully	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
			F	G	H
Minor hearing issues are easy enough to live with untreated			37%^g	26%	29%
My health insurance doesn't sufficiently cover the cost of treatment			29%^{gh}	20%	21%
Treating hearing issues would cost too much			28%	21%	29%
I am so busy dealing with other health issues that I don't focus on hearing difficulties			11%	12%	16%
I am not sure which type of health provider to go to			10%	9%	13%
I don't have health insurance			8%	14%^f	13%^f
I am not sure where to go for information			8%	8%	6%
I don't have transportation			2%	3%	2%
I don't think I have the physical ability needed to successfully use a hearing aid			2%	3%	3%
I don't think I can keep track of what I need to do to use hearing aids successfully			3%	3%	5%

- Of particular note, when asked about potential barriers to seeking help for a hearing issue, younger respondents are more likely than older ones to cite not having health insurance or not being sure where to go for information (see Table 5). Further, African American and Hispanic respondents are more likely than white ones to report not having health insurance.

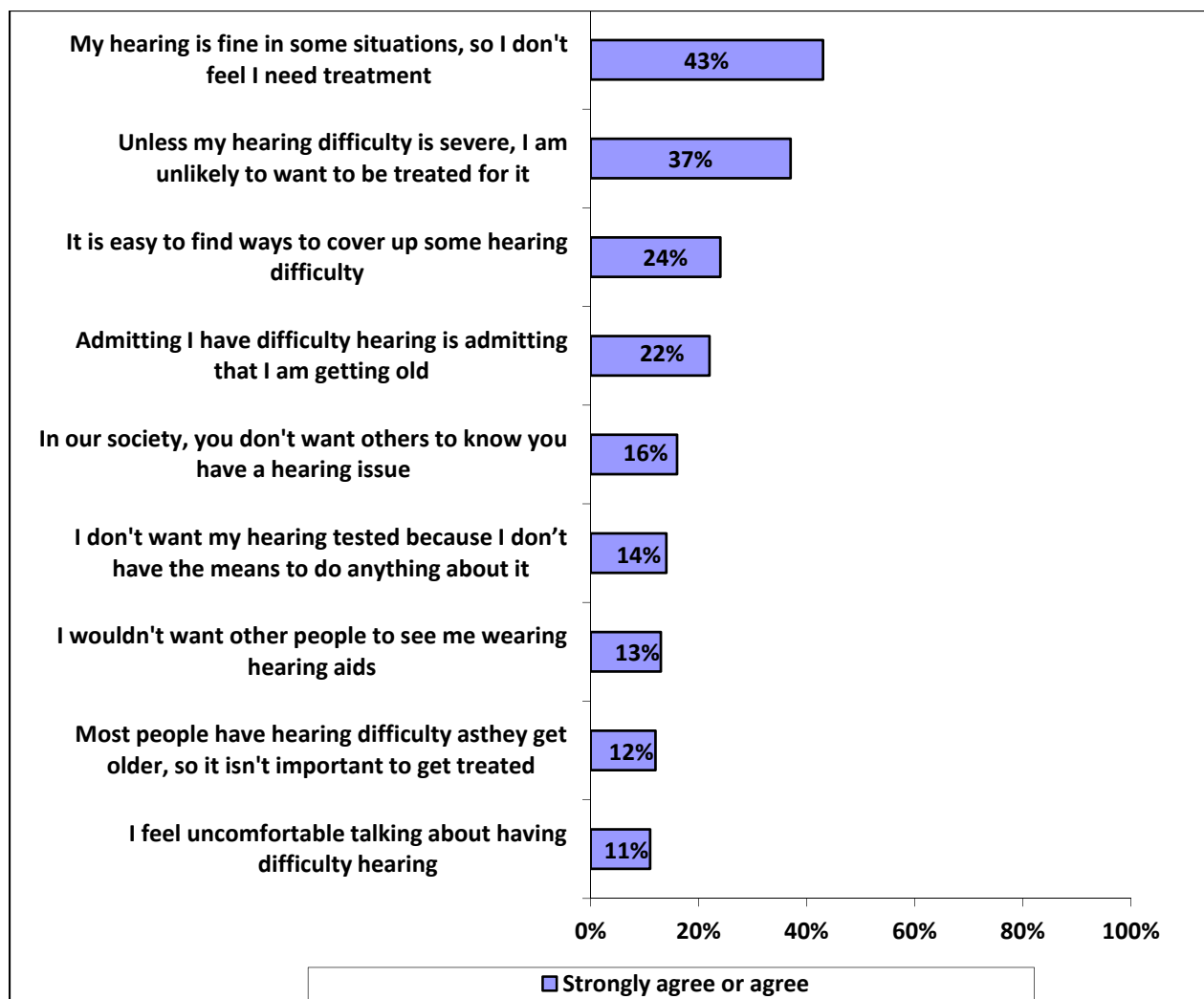
Opinions about Hearing-Related Statements

When employed respondents were asked if they would be concerned that hearing difficulties might affect their ability to remain employed or might reduce their effectiveness at work, large majorities said no (79% and 68%, respectively).

More than four in ten (43%) respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that their hearing is fine in some situations, so they don't feel they need treatment (see Figure 11). Expressing a similar sentiment, slightly more than one-third (37%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that unless their hearing difficulty is severe, they are unlikely to want to be treated for it.

Figure 11

The statements below describe how you may or may not feel about having a hearing issue. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

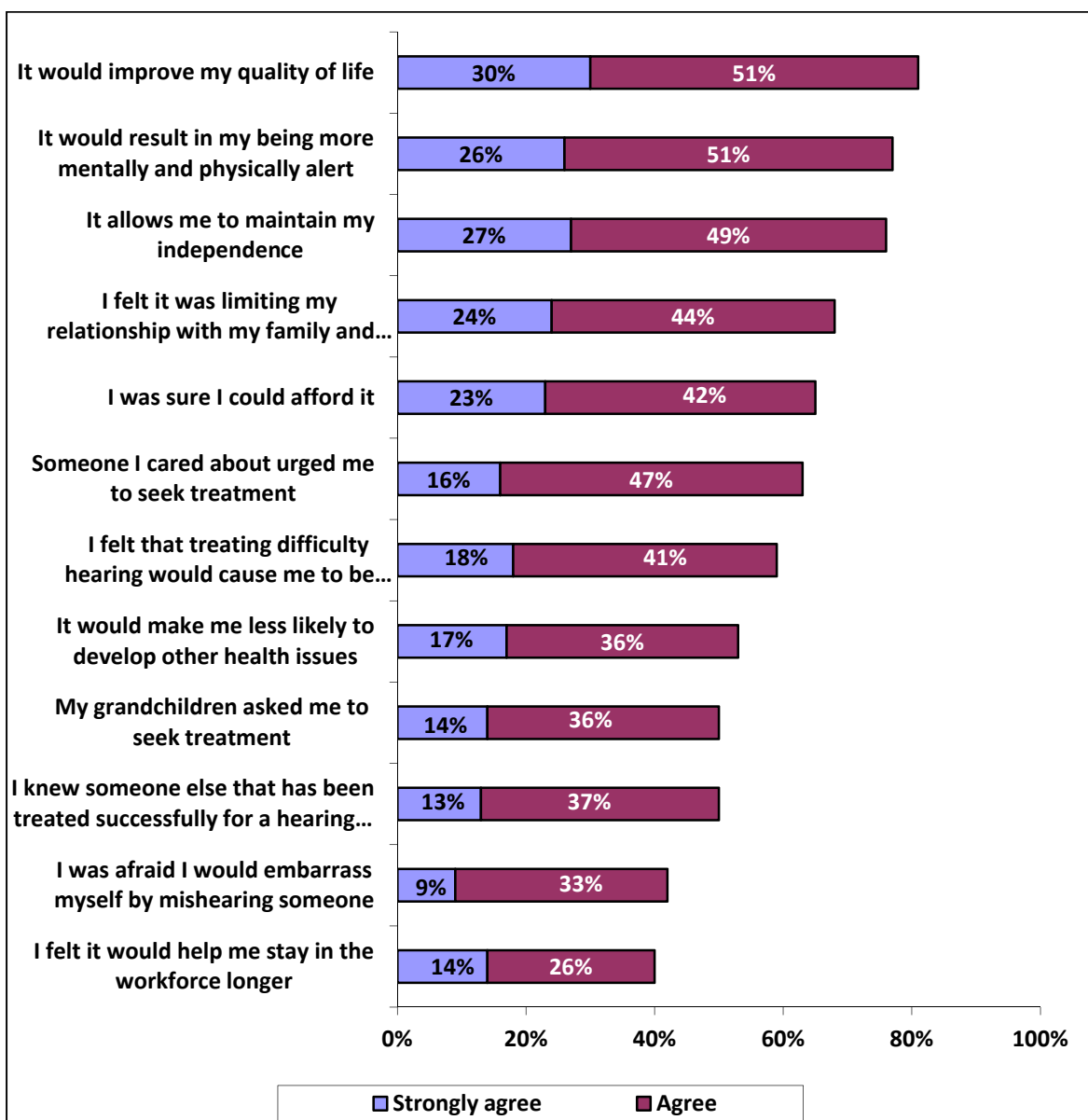
Table 6
Agreement with Hearing-Related Statements⁵
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
My hearing is fine in some situations, so I don't feel I need treatment	42%	44%	42%	45%	41%
Unless my hearing difficulty is severe, I am unlikely to want to be treated for it	39%	34%^a	37%	39%	35%
It is easy to find ways to cover up some hearing difficulty	23%	25%	26%	26%	21%
Admitting that I have difficulty hearing is admitting that I am getting old	25%^b	19%	23%	21%	22%
In our society, you don't want others to know you have a hearing issue	17%	15%	20%^e	18%^e	12%
I don't want my hearing tested because I don't have the means to do anything about it	14%	15%	15%	16%	13%
I wouldn't want other people seeing me wearing hearing aids	15%^b	11%	20%^{de}	14%	8%
Most people have difficulty as they get older, so it isn't important to get treated	15%^b	9%	14%	11%	13%
I feel uncomfortable talking about having difficulty hearing	12%	9%	13%	10%	9%
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
			F	G	H
My hearing is fine in some situations, so I don't feel I need treatment			43%	44%	44%
Unless my hearing difficulty is severe, I am unlikely to want to be treated for it			37%	31%	38%
It is easy to find ways to cover up some hearing difficulty			24%	25%	27%
Admitting that I have difficulty hearing is admitting that I am getting old			22%	20%	19%
In our society, you don't want others to know you have a hearing issue			15%	22%	22%
I don't want my hearing tested because I don't have the means to do anything about it			14%	13%	16%
I wouldn't want other people seeing me wearing hearing aids			12%	16%	16%
Most people have difficulty as they get older, so it isn't important to get treated			12%	16%	16%
I feel uncomfortable talking about having difficulty hearing			10%	12%	12%

⁵ Racial differences cited in the table should be considered as merely directional due to the small number of respondents per response category.

When asked statements about what might cause them to seek treatment for a hearing issue, more than eight in ten (81%) respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they would be more likely to seek treatment if it would improve their quality of life (see Figure 12). Slightly fewer respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* they would be more likely to seek treatment if it would result in their being more mentally and physically alert (77%) or if it would allow them to maintain their independence (76%).

Figure 12
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I would be more likely to seek treatment for a hearing issue if...
 (n=2,232)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 7
Agreement with Statements about Seeking Treatment⁶
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

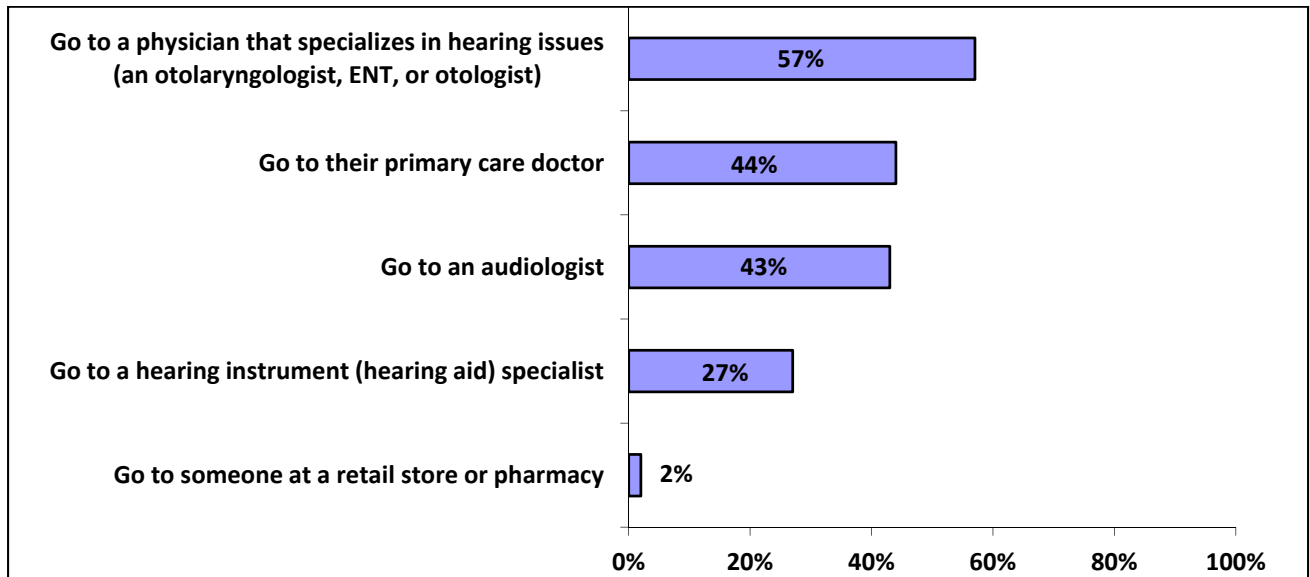
	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
<i>More likely to seek treatment if...</i>	A	B	C	D	E
It would improve my quality of life	79%	82%^a	83%^e	83%^e	77%
It would result in being more mentally and physically alert	76%	79%	79%	79%	75%
It allows me to maintain my independence	73%	81%^a	80%	77%	75%
I felt it was limiting my relationship with my family and friends	64%	73%^a	69%	71%	65%
I was sure I could afford it	61%	70%^a	70%	67%	61%
Someone I cared about urged me ...	62%	65%	65%	65%	61%
I felt that treating difficulty hearing would cause me to be less a burden on my family	54%	64%^a	64%	59%	56%
It would make me less likely to develop other health issues	48%	59%^a	64%	54%	46%
I knew someone else who had been treated successfully	48%	52%	49%	50%	51%
I was afraid I would embarrass myself by mishearing someone	37%	48%^a	42%	45%	40%
I felt it would help me stay in the workforce	31%	39%^a	51%^{de}	37%	24%
My grandchildren asked me to seek treatment	31%	36%^a	21%	36%^c	38%^c
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
<i>More likely to seek treatment if...</i>	F	G	H		
It would improve my quality of life	80%	83%	79%		
It would result in my being more mentally and physically alert	77%	79%	76%		
It allows me to maintain my independence	77%	82%	73%		
I felt it was limiting my relationship with my family and friends	69%	65%	58%		
I was sure I could afford it	65%	65%	60%		
Someone I cared about urged me to seek treatment	63%	65%	60%		
I felt that treating difficulty hearing would cause me to be less a burden on my family	59%	62%	53%		
It would make me less likely to develop other health issues	57%	61%	46%		
I knew someone else who had been treated successfully	51%	47%	43%		
I was afraid I would embarrass myself by mishearing someone	43%	34%	37%		
I felt it would help me stay in the workforce longer	34%	41%	40%		
My grandchildren asked me to seek treatment	33%	39%	29%		

⁶ Racial differences cited in the table should be considered as merely directional due to the small number of respondents per response category.

Respondents with a Family Member or Friend with Hearing Issues

More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents said they knew of a family member or friend who has difficulty hearing. Of those, six in ten (60%) said they have suggested that someone they know get professional help and treatment for a hearing issue. As shown in Figure 13, the most common suggestion among those who offered one was to go to a physician who specializes in hearing issues (57%) followed by going to a primary care physician (44%) or to an audiologist (43%).

Figure 13
What have you suggested a person with a hearing issue do?
Among respondents who suggested treatment for a hearing issue (n=916)



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Interestingly, while the largest percentage of respondents said they would suggest someone they knew visit a physician who specializes in hearing issues, when the question was about their own hearing health, the largest percentage of respondents said they would check with their primary care doctor (65%) followed by a hearing specialist (52%) (see Figure 8).

Respondents with Hearing Difficulties

Among respondents who reported having difficulty with their hearing, three-quarters (75%) said they had discussed their hearing issue with an audiologist. Somewhat fewer said they had discussed their hearing issue with a hearing instrument specialist (57%), a physician that specializes in hearing issues (54%), or their primary care physician (43%).

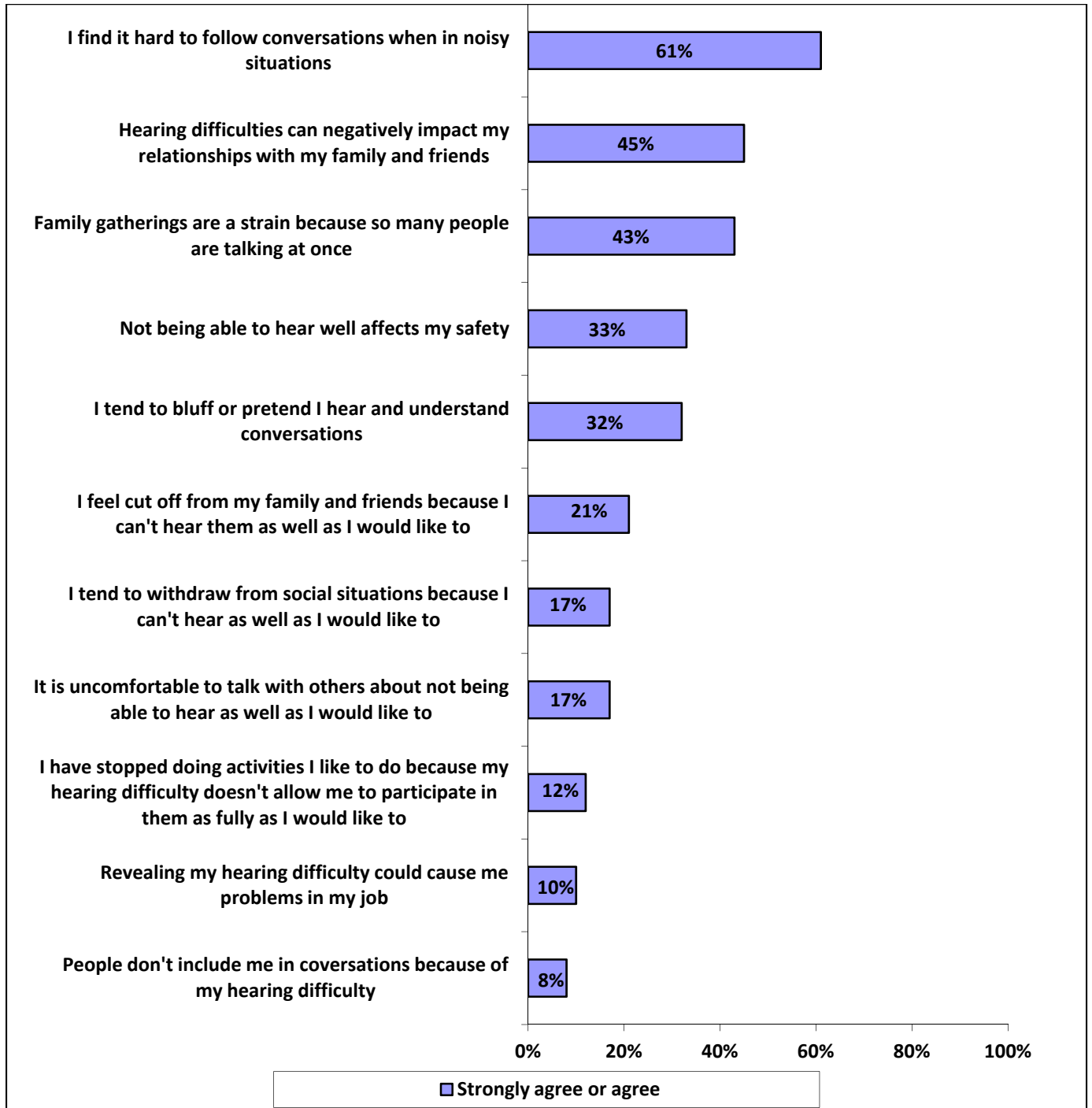
When read a series of statements about hearing loss, more than six in ten (61%) respondents who said they had hearing loss *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they find it hard to follow conversations in noisy situations (see Figure 14). About four in ten *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that hearing difficulties can negatively affect their relationships (45%) and that family gatherings are a strain because so many people are talking at once (43%).

Only about one-fifth (or fewer) of those respondents with hearing loss *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with six of the eleven statements they were asked about, including feeling cut off from family and friends because they can't hear as well as they would like to, withdrawing from social situations due to hearing difficulties, and being uncomfortable talking with others about their hearing issues.

- As shown in Table 8, men are more likely than women to *agree* or *strongly agree* that they find it hard to follow conversations when in noisy situations, that family gatherings are a strain due to many people speaking at once, and that people do not include them in conversations due to their difficulty hearing.
- As for age differences, in general, older respondents are more likely than younger ones to express *agreement* with each of the statements. The two exceptions are related to feeling cut off from family and friends due to hearing issues and feeling uncomfortable discussing their hearing issues with others wherein younger respondents are more likely to express *agreement* than are older respondents.

Figure 14

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about hearing loss?
(n=1,509)**



Source: *The State of Hearing Health: A Study of AARP Members*, December 2011

Table 8
Agreement with Statement about Hearing Loss
By Gender, Age, and Racial Group

	Men	Women	50-59	60-69	70-79
	N=1183	N=1049	N=519	N=799	N=914
	A	B	C	D	E
I find it hard to follow conversations when in noisy situations	63%^b	58%	56%	61%	64%
Hearing difficulties can negatively impact my relationships with my family and friends	45%	43%	41%	45%	45%
Family gatherings are a strain because so many people are talking at once	45%^b	40%	38%	38%	49%
Not being able to hear well affects my safety	32%	34%	30%	35%	32%
I tend to bluff or pretend I can hear and understand conversations	33%	30%	32%	34%	30%
I feel cut off from my family and friends because I can't hear them as well as I would like to	21%	20%	16%	21%	23%
I tend to withdraw from social situations because I can't hear as well as I would like	18%	16%	13%	17%	20%
It is uncomfortable to talk with others about not being able to hear as well as I would like	18%	16%	20%	16%	17%
I have stopped doing activities I like to do because my hearing difficulty doesn't allow me to participate	12%	13%	8%	11%	16%
People don't include me in conversations because of my hearing difficulty	10%^b	6%	6%	8%	10%
Revealing my hearing difficulty could cause me problems in my job	3%	3%	5%	5%	<1%
			White	Black	Hispanic
			N=1966	N=182	N=72
			F	G	H
I find it hard to follow conversations when in noisy situations			63%	43%	56%
Hearing difficulties can negatively impact my relationships with my family & friends			45%	40%	37%
Family gatherings are a strain because so many people are talking at once			44%	27%	33%
Not being able to hear well affects my safety			33%	36%	34%
I tend to bluff or pretend I can hear and understand conversations			32%	28%	30%
I feel cut off from my family and friends because I can't hear them as well as I would like to			21%	10%	21%
I tend to withdraw from social situations because I can't hear as well as I would like			18%	10%	20%
It is uncomfortable to talk with others about not being able to hear as well as I would like			18%	9%	20%
I have stopped doing activities I like to do because my hearing difficulty doesn't allow me to participate			13%	6%	12%
People don't include me in conversations because of my hearing difficulty			8%	6%	7%
Revealing my hearing difficulty could cause me problems in my job			3%	4%	6%

Summary

Hearing health is clearly an important concern, with roughly three-quarters of respondents saying it is an *extremely* or *very important* concern for themselves and other adults ages 50 and older and slightly fewer seeing it as an *extremely* or *important concern* for their friends and family members. Additionally, more than eight in ten respondents reported that their hearing health is *extremely* or *very important* to them in maintaining their quality of life and about two-thirds of respondents noted that getting regular hearing check-ups gets *insufficient attention* in comparison to other health issues.

But, about half of the respondents reported having untreated hearing issues, including the one-third of respondents who believe their hearing is not as good as it should be, but do not believe it needs to be treated. Similarly, among the barriers cited in seeking help for a hearing issue, more than one-third of respondents noted their belief that minor hearing issues are easy enough to live with untreated.

In a separate question, respondents noted similar barriers to treatment, including the belief that their hearing is “good enough,” fine in some situations and not in need of treatment, or that unless their hearing difficulties are severe, they will not seek treatment, or that it is easy to find ways to cover up some hearing difficulty.

Notably, cost concerns also rose to the top in this discussion of hearing issues, with about three in ten respondents reporting that their health insurance would be insufficient in covering the full cost of treatment or noting that treating hearing issues would be too costly for them.

When it comes to reasons for seeking treatment, however, respondents cited improved quality of life, enhanced mental and physical alertness, and the ability to maintain their independence. Respondents who reported having difficulty hearing also mentioned the negative effect that hearing problems pose for them, including making it harder to follow conversations with friends and family members, causing family gatherings to often be a strain with many people talking at once, and raising concerns about their overall safety.

Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The State of Hearing Health	
N=2,232	
Age	
50-54	9%
55-59	14%
60-64	19%
65-69	17%
70-74	13%
75+	28%
Gender	
Men	53%
Women	47%
Employment Status	
Employed Full-Time	23%
Employed Part-Time	10%
Not employed, but looking for work	4%
Not employed, and not looking for work	3%
Retired, not employed	57%
Homemaker	2%
Educational Level	
High school graduate or less	19%
Some college, but no degree	23%
Two- or Four-year college degree	27%
Some graduate school, but no degree	8%
Graduate degree	23%
Marital Status	
Single, never married	7%
Married	59%
Divorced	16%
Separated	1%
Widowed	14%
Living with partner	3%
Race or Ethnicity	
White	81%
Black or African-American	9%
Asian	1%
Native American or Alaska Native	<1%
Mixed racial	2%
Other	<1%
Declined to answer	6%

Appendix B: Annotated Questionnaire

**The State of Hearing Health
Annotated Questionnaire
(N=2,232)**

This poll is being conducted by AARP in conjunction with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. We are interested in learning about your opinions regarding hearing health. Results of this poll may be covered by the media.

This poll is completely confidential. You are being asked to take part because you are an AARP member. All questions are optional and you will not be identified with your answers in any way.

THE STATE OF HEARING HEALTH (AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES)

Q200 Which of the following have you had in the past 5 years? *Select all that apply.*

Blood pressure monitoring	85%
Bone density test	40%
Cholesterol screening	81%
Colonoscopy	58%
Hearing test	43%
Mammograms [Women only]	40%
Prostate exam [Men only]	41%
Vaccinations (e.g. flu shots)	71%
Vision test	88%
None of these	2%

Q205 This poll will ask you a number of questions about hearing health and hearing loss.

In your opinion, how important of a concern is hearing health to ...?

	Not a concern at all	Not a very important concern	Somewhat important concern	Very important concern	Extremely important concern
The US population in general	2%	17%	33%	32%	16%
People aged 50 or older	<1%	3%	23%	47%	26%
Your close family members/friends	2%	6%	22%	42%	28%
You personally	3%	5%	16%	37%	39%

Q210 In your opinion, does the importance of getting a regular hearing check-up get ...?

Insufficient attention compared to other health issues	68%
About the right amount of attention compared to other health issues	30%
Too much attention compared to other health issues	2%

Q215 As you get older, how important is maintaining your hearing health to the quality of your life?

Not important at all	<1%
Not very important	1%
Somewhat important	14%
Very important	50%
Extremely important	85%

Q220 If you felt you had an issue with your hearing health, how likely would you be to get a hearing check-up?

Not likely at all	<1%
Not very likely	4%
Somewhat likely	15%
Very likely	44%
Extremely likely	37%

Q225 If you felt you had an issue with your hearing health, how confident are you that you would know where to go to get help?

Not confident at all	4%
Not very confident	9%
Somewhat confident	22%
Very confident	40%
Extremely confident	26%

Q230 Whom would you be likely to talk to if you felt you had an issue with your hearing health?
Select all that apply.

A family member	23%
A friend	14%
A hearing instrument (hearing aid) specialist	20%
An audiologist	40%
A physician that specializes in hearing issues (an otolaryngologist, ENT, or otologist)	52%
Your primary care doctor	65%
Someone at a retail store or pharmacy	2%
Someone else	2%
Nobody – I'd be unlikely to seek help for a hearing issue	1%

Q233 If you felt you had an issue with your hearing health, where would you look for information? *Select all that apply.*

Books	9%
Health newsletters	26%
Magazines	9%
Radio	3%
Television	7%
The Internet	58%
A telephone directory (e.g. Yellow Pages)	21%
Events, such as health fairs or seminars	20%
None of these	24%

Q234 What would be the most effective way for a health care provider in your area to communicate with you regarding the importance of getting your hearing checked? *Select one response option.*

Ads in your local newspaper	9%
Ads on the radio	2%
Ads on local TV station	22%
The Internet	17%
An event, such as a health fair or seminar	23%
None of these would be effective	28%

Q235 Which of the following would be critically important to you if you were to seek help for a hearing issue? *Select all that apply.*

Finding a way to pay for care	45%
Finding a location that is easy for you to get to	41%
Finding a professional with a high level of training on hearing issues	74%
How concerned and caring the provider seems to be	44%
The follow-up services provided by the provider	53%
The quality of the hearing exam	65%
None of these would be critically important	1%

Q240 Which best describes your own hearing health?

My hearing is excellent	32%
My hearing isn't as good as it could be, but I don't think I need to be treated	32%
I have hearing difficulty but haven't been treated	15%
I have hearing difficulty and have been treated	20%

Q245 How would you describe your hearing compared to 5 years ago?

My hearing is much worse than it was 5 years ago	9%
My hearing is a little worse than it was 5 years ago	37%
My hearing is the same as it was 5 years ago	52%
My hearing is a little better than it was 5 years ago	1%
My hearing is much better than it was 5 years ago	1%

Q255 Which of these statements apply to you? *Select yes if the statement is true for you.*
 [MULTIPLE RESPONSE] [RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	% Yes
A family member often has to repeat what other people say to me so I can understand.	30%
I have difficulty hearing when there is noise in the background.	57%
I have difficulty understanding the speech of women and children.	25%
I hear a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound a lot.	29%
I sometimes have to strain to understand a conversation.	48%
I sometimes misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately.	35%
It is hard for me to follow a conversation when two or more people talk at once.	37%
Many people I talk to seem to mumble (or not speak clearly).	33%
I avoid interacting with others because I can't always hear them as well as I would like to.	13%
People complain that I turn the TV volume up too high.	29%
Other people suggest that I might have difficulty hearing	29%
None of these are true statements.	24%

Q260 Do you know a family member or friend who has difficulty hearing?

Yes	68%
No	32%

BASE: KNOW SOMEONE WITH A HEARING ISSUE: n=1,515

Q265 Have you ever suggested to someone that they get professional help and treatment for a hearing issue?

Yes	60%
No	40%

BASE: HAVE SUGGESTED SOMEONE GET TREATMENT FOR HEARING ISSUE: n=916

Q267 What have you suggested a person with a hearing issue do? *Select all that apply.*

[RANDOMIZE ORDER] [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Go to a hearing instrument (hearing aid) specialist	27%
Go to an audiologist	43%
Go to a physician that specializes in hearing issues (an otolaryngologist, ENT, or otologist)	57%
Go to their primary care doctor	44%
Go to someone at a retail store or pharmacy	2%
Something else [ANCHOR]	3%

BASE: HAVE BEEN TREATED FOR HEARING LOSS : n=456

Q270 Have you discussed your hearing issue with ...? *Select all that apply.*

[RANDOMIZE ORDER] [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Your primary care physician	43%
A physician that specializes in hearing issues (an otolaryngologist, ENT, or otologist)	54%
An audiologist	75%
A hearing instrument specialist	57%
None of these [ANCHOR; EXCLUSIVE]	2%

Q275 Do you currently own hearing aids?

Yes, I own hearing aids	18%
No, I do not	82%

Q280 Do you currently use other hearing assistive technologies, other than hearing aids?

(These would include technologies such as personal FM systems, infrared systems, induction loop systems, one-to-one communicators, amplified telephone, and TV ears.)

Yes, I use other hearing assistive technologies	7%
No, I do not	93%

BASE: OWNS HEARING AIDS: n=396

Q281 How frequently do you wear your hearing aids?

During all or most of the time I am awake	61%
When I feel I need them	28%
Rarely, if ever	11%

BASE: OWNS HEARING AIDS: n=396

Q285 How would you rate your quality of life since you have been wearing hearing aids?

Since I have been wearing hearing aids, the quality of my hearing has been ...?

Much worse	1%
Somewhat worse	3%
About the same	23%
Somewhat better	40%
Much better	33%

BASE: OWNS HEARING AIDS: n=396

Q286 How would you rate your satisfaction with your hearing aids?

Not satisfied at all	6%
Not very satisfied	13%
Somewhat satisfied	40%
Very satisfied	34%
Extremely satisfied	8%

BASE: DISSATISFIED WITH HEARING AIDS: n=237

Q287 Why are you less than fully satisfied with your hearing aids? *Select all that apply.*

[RANDOMIZE ORDER] [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

I don't have enough information on how to properly use them	2%
I wasn't taught how to use them properly	2%
They are too difficult to operate	2%
The batteries are too difficult to change	7%
I can't hear as well as I expected in a crowded room with many conversations going on	79%
I can't hear as well as I expected to for one-on-one conversations	44%
I can't hear the TV or radio as well as I expected I could	42%
I don't like the way hearing aids look	5%
Hearing aids make me look old	3%
Some other reason	31%
None of these	5%

SECTION 300: PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Q305 [Suppose that you suspected that you might have difficulty hearing.] Which of the following might prevent you from getting help for a hearing issue? *Select all that apply.* [RANDOMIZE ORDER]
[MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

I am not sure where to go for information	8%
I am not sure which type of health provider to go to	10%
I don't have health insurance	8%
I don't have transportation	2%
I don't think I have the physical ability I would need to successfully use a hearing aid or other device	2%
I don't think I can keep track of what I need to do to use hearing aids successfully	2%
I am so busy dealing with other health issues that I don't focus on hearing difficulties	12%
My health insurance doesn't sufficiently cover the cost of treatment for hearing issues	28%
Treating hearing issues would cost too much	27%
Minor hearing issues are easy enough to live with untreated	36%
None of these	35%

BASE: QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS

Q310 [Suppose that you suspected that you might have difficulty hearing.] The statements below describe how you may or not feel about having a hearing issue. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Admitting I have difficulty hearing is admitting that I am getting old.	31%	33%	15%	18%	4%
I feel uncomfortable talking about having difficulty hearing.	33%	40%	16%	8%	3%
I wouldn't want other people to see me wearing hearing aids.	34%	37%	16%	9%	4%
In our society, you don't want others to know you have a hearing issue.	28%	38%	18%	13%	3%
It is easy to find ways to cover up some hearing difficulties.	17%	30%	29%	22%	2%
Most people have hearing difficulty as they get older, so it isn't important to get treated.	31%	42%	15%	10%	2%
My hearing is fine in some situations, so I don't feel I need treatment.	15%	21%	21%	33%	10%
I don't want my hearing tested because I don't have the means to do anything about it.	36%	36%	13%	10%	4%
Unless I feel my hearing difficulty is severe, I am unlikely to want to be treated for it.	19%	29%	15%	31%	6%

BASE: THOSE WHO ARE EMPLOYED: n=744

Q315 [Suppose that you suspected that you might have difficulty hearing.] Are you/would you be concerned that hearing difficulties would hurt your ability to remain employed?

Yes	21%
No	79%

BASE: THOSE WHO ARE EMPLOYED: n=744

Q320 [Suppose that you suspected that you might have difficulty hearing.] Are you/would you be concerned that hearing difficulties are reducing/would reduce your effectiveness at work?

Yes	32%
No	68%

SECTION 400: ENABLERS/DRIVERS OF PROPER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Q400 [Suppose that you suspected that you might have a hearing issue.] The statements below describe things that might or might not cause you to seek treatment for a hearing issue. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [MULTIPLE RESPONSE] [RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<u>I would be more likely to seek treatment if ...?</u>					
I felt it was limiting my relationship with my family and friends.	6%	13%	13%	44%	24%
I felt it would help me stay in the workforce longer	9%	13%	38%	26%	14%
I felt that treating difficult hearing would cause me to be less of a burden on my family.	6%	13%	21%	41%	18%
I knew someone else that has been treated successfully for a hearing difficulty.	6%	13%	30%	37%	13%
I was afraid that I would embarrass myself by mishearing someone.	10%	24%	24%	33%	9%
It would improve my quality of life.	3%	4%	13%	51%	30%
It would make me less likely to develop other health issues.	7%	16%	24%	36%	17%
It would result in my being more mentally and physically alert.	3%	6%	14%	51%	26%
My grandchildren asked me to seek treatment. [ASK OF THOSE WITH GRANDCHILDREN].	9%	18%	24%	36%	14%
Someone I cared about urged me to seek treatment.	5%	10%	22%	47%	16%
It allows me to maintain my independence.	4%	5%	14%	49%	27%
I was sure I could afford it.	5%	10%	19%	42%	23%

Q405 How concerned are you that excessive use of ear buds and headphones will cause hearing difficulty for today's young people?

Not concerned at all	5%
Not very concerned	6%
Somewhat concerned	30%
Very concerned	38%
Extremely concerned	21%

SECTION 500: PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF HEARING ISSUES

BASE: ADMIT THEY HAVE SOME HEARING LOSS: n=1509

Q500 Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about hearing loss.

[MULTIPLE RESPONSE] [DO NOT RANDOMIZE ORDER]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Family gatherings are a strain because so many people are talking at once.	9%	27%	22%	33%	10%
Hearing difficulties can negatively impact my relationships with my family and friends.	8%	26%	22%	38%	7%
I feel cut off from my family and friends because I can't hear them as well as I would like to.	17%	43%	19%	16%	5%
I find it hard to follow conversations when in noisy situations.	7%	19%	12%	45%	16%
I have stopped doing activities I like to do because my hearing difficulty doesn't allow me to participate in them as fully as I would like to.	26%	46%	16%	9%	3%
I tend to bluff or pretend I hear and understand conversations.	16%	33%	19%	27%	5%
I tend to withdraw from social situations because I can't hear as well as I would like to.	22%	45%	15%	13%	4%
It is uncomfortable to talk with others about not being able to hear as well as I would like to.	20%	45%	17%	14%	3%
Not being able to hear well affects my safety.	13%	32%	22%	26%	7%
People don't include me in conversations because of my hearing difficulty.	25%	50%	17%	6%	2%
Revealing my hearing difficulty could cause me problems in my job.	28%	45%	17%	9%	1%

SECTION 600: OTHER ISSUES/CLASSIFICATIONS

Q600 Which one of the following best describes your employment status?

Employed in a full-time job	23%
Employed in a part-time job	10%
Not employed, but looking for work	4%
Not employed and not looking for work	3%
Retired and not employed	57%
Homemaker	2%

Q605 Which best describes the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received? [SINGLE RESPONSE]

Less than high school	<1%
Completed some high school	3%
High school graduate or equivalent (e.g., GED)	16%
Completed some college, but no degree	23%
Two-year college degree (e.g. associate's degree)	10%
Four-year college degree (e.g., B.A., B.S.)	17%
Completed some graduate school, but no degree	8%
Graduate degree (e.g., M.S., M.D., Ph.D.)	23%
Not sure	<1%

Q610 What is your marital status? [SINGLE RESPONSE]

Single, never married	7%
Married	59%
Divorced	16%
Separated	1%
Widowed	14%
Living with partner	3%

Q615 Including yourself, how many adults aged 18 or older do you live with? [RANGE 0-9]

One	39%
Two	49%
Three	8%
Four	3%
Five or more	1%

Q620 Not including e-mail, in a typical week how many hours do you spend on the Internet?
If you are not sure, your best estimate is fine. [RANGE: 0-168]

Less than 5 hours	30%
5-9 hours	21%
10-14 hours	18%
15-19 hours	7%
20 hours or more	24%

Thanks for taking time to answer our questions!



Research & Strategic Analysis
601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049

www.aarp.org/research

©2011 AARP

Reprinting with permission only