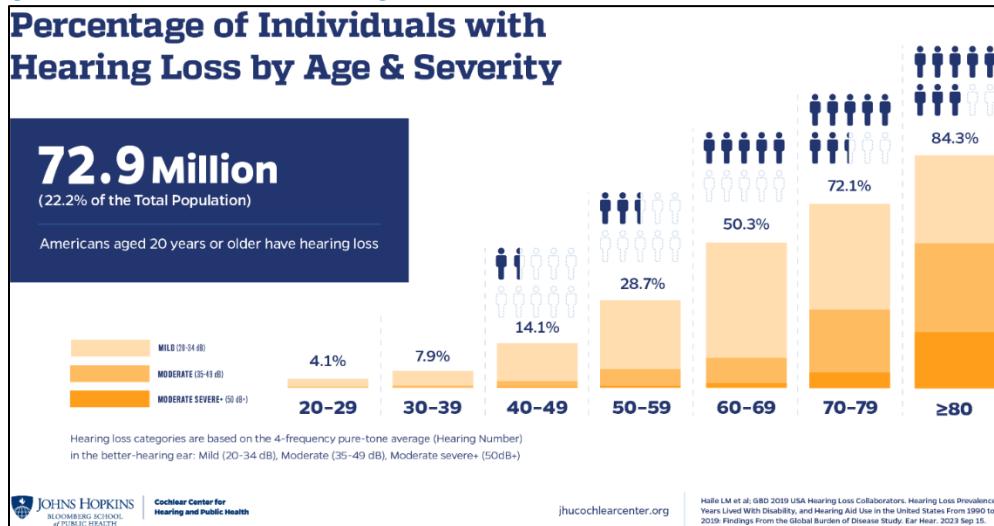


## Hearing Loss Increases with Age

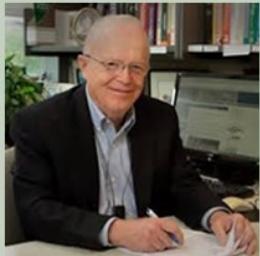


<https://www.jhucochlearcenter.org/infographic-hearing-loss-prevalence-us>

To communicate, approximately:

- 97.2% to 99% use spoken language [hearing loss]
- 1% to 2.8% use American Sign Language (ASL) [d/Deaf]
- <1% use some form of tactile communication [DeafBlind]

## About Hearing Loss



"As a person with hearing loss, I often find lectures, plays, and PA system announcements indecipherable. But who else notices? Unlike someone visibly left outside because of wheelchair inaccessibility – which would leave others appalled – inaccessibility due to hearing loss is invisible and thus often unremedied."

-David G. Myers, Author and Psychology Professor, Hope College

People with hearing loss often struggle to understand speech in the presence of background noise or reverberation. Thus, the need for assistive listening systems that can improve auditory comprehension in three ways: filtering out background noise, overcoming poor acoustics, and reducing the distance to the sound source. All of these benefits occur because the sound reaches the individual's ears directly.

Assistive listening systems bring clarity **that cannot be achieved in other ways.**

1. Hearing aids help, but **do not cure hearing loss.**
2. Hearing aids improve SNR by approximately **6 dB**. Assistive listening systems give up to **30 dB SNR** (signal-to-noise-ratio. The higher the number, the easier it is to understand).
3. People with hearing loss need **sound clarity**. It is not just a matter of volume.
4. Top-of-the-line hearing aids provide the most benefit for speech understanding when the sound source is **within 6 feet**.

# Hearing Loss and The Need for Assistive Listening Systems

5. Solely turning up the hearing aid volume also magnifies extraneous noise and reverberation and can make understanding even worse.
6. **People who do not wear hearing aids** need access to clear speech in public places.
7. Assistive listening systems are beneficial for any degree of hearing loss (mild to profound)
8. People with other disabilities need **clear, focused audio**.
9. **Room acoustics and background noise** can be problematic for individuals with hearing loss and many others.

Even with quality hearing aids, people with hearing loss experience listening fatigue due to the continuous effort required to understand words. Assistive listening systems allow the brain to decrease working "overtime" to fill in gaps, and people can relax, understand more, and fully participate.

## Who uses assistive listening systems?

These systems are available for everyone! People with mild to profound hearing loss, people on the autism spectrum, people who have low vision and need to identify which voice to listen to, auditory processing needs, etc. Anyone who wishes to hear clearer with less background noise!

## Resources

- [Hearing aid limitations](#). A collection of research-based articles
- ["What you don't know about hearing aids"](#) by Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens, audiologist (TEDx, 17 min)

## 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public spaces that use a public address system to also provide an assistive listening system. "In each assembly area where audible communication is integral to the use of the space, an assistive listening system shall be provided."

Assistive listening systems are part of the "built-environment" and should therefore ALWAYS be available and functional. The ADA does not require that consumers request use in advance.

The ADA is "complaint-driven," placing the burden on consumers to report problems at places they enjoy and frequent.

## Additional information

- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) standards for assistive listening (webpage with resources, including a 1-page summary)

## About the Center for Hearing Access

Founded in 2024, the nonprofit Center for Hearing Access is a national advocacy and education initiative of The John G. Shedd Institute. We champion and educate users, facility staff, hearing instrument specialists, and audiologists about all ADA-compliant assistive listening systems and other strategies to increase access to theaters, libraries, conferences, government offices, healthcare facilities, courtrooms, places of worship, and other public and private spaces. Effective hearing access can be life-changing for people with hearing loss to maintain community engagement.

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