The State of Hearing Report 2019



Hear now. And always

Cochlear®

FOREWORD:

Hearing is crucial to maintain connections with the world around us. It enables us to communicate with loved ones, with colleagues and participate fully in society. Hearing loss can be preventable and is treatable, but it is not prioritised in the same way as other health conditions.



Typically, we accept that losing our hearing, as we age, is part of the ageing process rather than a medical condition that can be treated.[1] This leads to delays in prevention, monitoring, diagnosis and treatment, which can result in people having a poorer quality of life.[2]

As the world's population continues to live longer, preventing hearing loss, while maintaining and restoring hearing, will become increasingly important for people's health and wellbeing. There is increasing evidence of the links between healthy hearing and healthy ageing. Evidence shows a link between hearing loss and cognitive decline, depression and social isolation.

The good news is a solution could start by people simply changing how they think about hearing loss. Getting a hearing test can be the first step towards maintaining quality of life, wellbeing and continuing to feel part of society.

Cochlear commissioned this State of Hearing Report to support the World Health Organization's goal to raise awareness of hearing loss, while helping to understand and transform the way people view hearing health and its association with older age across the world.

We hope that raising the profile of hearing loss will empower more people to take action and ultimately benefit from better hearing, which can help keep the mind sharp and safeguard connections with the world.[3,4,5,6,7]



Dig Howitt
CEO and President, Cochlear

A GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss is a global health problem that can devastate people's lives. It can impact their relationships, affect their contribution to society and place a burden on the global economy. Hearing loss can be preventable and treatable.[1] However, despite its prevalence, we continue to dismiss hearing loss as an inevitable part of getting older.

New research suggests that almost half of us have a family member with some level of hearing loss.[1] Yet it's not prioritised as a health issue in many societies.

This results in irregular hearing health check-ups and delayed action. Compounding this, many people who have identified some form of hearing loss have not taken any action to get their hearing checked.[8]

Hearing loss not only means losing the ability to process sound. Many people with hearing loss also find themselves withdrawing from conversations and social gatherings.[8] They can become increasingly isolated, losing confidence and self-esteem.[8] With the number of people aged 60 years and over predicted to double by 2050,[2] hearing loss must be high on the agenda for both society and individuals to help keep minds sharp and strengthen social connections.[3,4,5,6,7]



71% of respondents think hearing loss is unavoidable as we get older[8]

Nearly nine out of 10 people who have a close family member with hearing loss say it affects communication with their loved ones.[8] As such, we should do more to support those who are vulnerable and shift the way we think about hearing health and age.

Cochlear commissioned this report to understand international attitudes and experiences of hearing loss to help challenge the perception that hearing loss is inevitable as people age. It's time we all prioritise hearing health, so millions of people around the world can benefit from better hearing.

The State of Hearing Report

The State of Hearing Report 2019 surveyed people in five countries; Australia, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States to get a global perspective of how hearing affects individuals and communities. Some important trends emerged after speaking with more than 7,200 people, including a representative sample of the population in each country as well as more than 1,051 people over the age of 60[8] living with hearing loss.

> "Hearing care commonly fails to gain the attention and resource allocation that it deserves."
>
> World Health Organization, 2014[2]



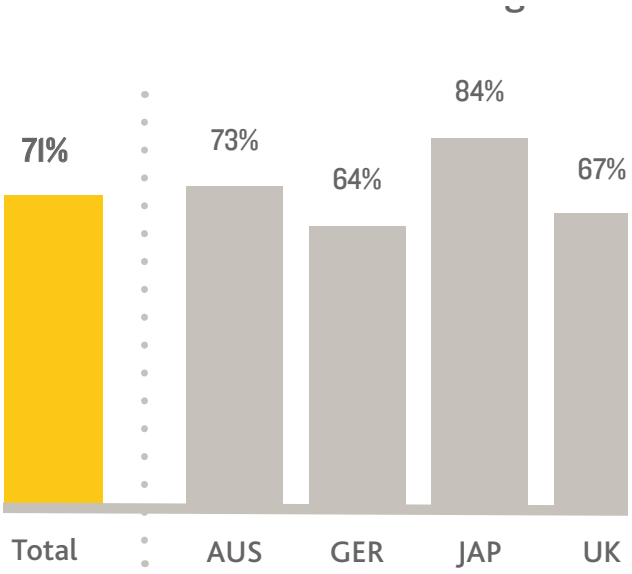
HEARING LOSS:
SOUNDS INEVITABLE?

The global survey revealed that although hearing loss can be a preventable and treatable health condition,[1] seven in 10 people believe it is unavoidable as we get older.[8] This belief is even stronger among people who already live with hearing loss.[8]

This perception that hearing loss is inevitable can lead to delays in prevention, monitoring and treatment. Left untreated, people with hearing loss can experience a poorer quality of life.[2]

The majority of people living with disabling hearing loss are adults (93 per cent).[1] It affects more and more people as we age, with one in three people aged over 65 living with hearing loss.[1,3,4] With life expectancy increasing,[5] empowering people to live a healthy and fulfilling life will become increasingly important.

Hearing loss affects a significant amount of people in our community. Almost half of all respondents say they have a close family member – a parent, a child or a sibling – with moderate-to-profound hearing loss.[8]





90%

of people surveyed believe hearing loss has a big impact on the lives of people with the condition.[8]

Most hearing loss is gradual and painless, which means people may not be getting their hearing checked regularly or seeking treatment when they should. Instead, they adjust their lives to accommodate; like turning up the volume on the TV. This doesn't have to be the case.

We need a cultural shift in thinking to change this behaviour. Healthcare professionals, government and organisations must work together to educate and reframe perceptions of healthy ageing and hearing loss.



HEARING LOSS CAN ISOLATE FAMILY MEMBERS

Hearing loss is a significant health issue which can impact our ability to have conversations with loved ones and friends. It can reduce our ability to stay connected[1] and be productive.[8]

Restoring hearing loss can help restore quality of life for individuals, strengthen connections for communities and make societies more productive. Left unaddressed, hearing loss can cause social isolation and make it difficult for many people to work.[1]

More than 90 per cent of people surveyed around the world say hearing is important to their quality of life.[8] Now that we are living longer, maintaining our relationships needs to be top of mind. We can see the implications of not doing so – six in 10 people surveyed around the world feel it's difficult for people with hearing loss to integrate into society.[8]

Impact of hearing loss on quality of life:



of people surveyed around the world believe hearing loss reduces job prospects[10]

Hearing loss affects relationships in millions of families worldwide[8]

> “Because I can hear, see and do, I’m taking more interest in my life around me. My grandchildren have seen a massive change in me. I’m going to family gatherings. I would have said ‘no’ 12 months ago. Now I’m going.”

Mariann, who recently addressed her hearing loss

Almost half of the surveyed population (46 per cent) have a family member with some level of hearing loss.[8] The overwhelming majority of people (84 per cent) believe hearing loss can affect relationships.[8] We need to do more to empower people to connect.

66% of people surveyed globally in this report think that people with hearing loss can experience withdrawal and isolation, or exclusion from society.[10]



OUR POPULATION
IS AGEING TOO QUIETLY

Hearing is important. This means it's critical to get our hearing checked as a regular part of ongoing healthcare. With the number of people aged 60 years and over predicted to double by 2050,[9] we want to help people understand the importance of taking action, so they seek help.

The outdated perception that hearing loss is an inevitable part of ageing gives rise to irregular health check-ups and delayed action. We need to do more to dispel such myths and get people to act.

Seven in 10 respondents who identify as having some level of hearing loss said they have not had their hearing checked.[8] Even among people aged 65 and over with hearing loss, almost half (45 per cent) have not had their hearing checked.[8]

Delayed responses to hearing loss may be reinforced by the low priority we give it as a health condition. In fact, the study revealed that few doctors check hearing in physical examinations,[8] leaving this task to individual patients or their loved ones to initiate.



> "As the global population is growing and ageing, there is likely to be a corresponding rise in the number of people who experience hearing loss across the world.[2]"

World Health Organization, 2018

Across the globe, almost

73% know where to have their hearing tested, but only...

37% have had their hearing tested in the last two years.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS AROUND THE GLOBE

As part of the State of Hearing Report, people were asked to rate their perceptions on whether their country provides adequate support for hearing care. Each person was asked to rate their country's performance on five key services; provision of hearing tests, providing workplace facilities to support people living with hearing loss, hearing education, support facilities (such as healthcare and treatment) and public facilities (such as transport) enabling people with hearing loss to function.

Across surveyed countries, we see a gap between knowledge and access to hearing checks.

Country	Average Rating %	Key Takeaways
Germany 	42%	People in Germany are most informed on where to get their hearing tested, yet only 39 per cent have had their hearing checked in the last two years.[8]
UK 	35%	People in the UK are least likely to have had a hearing test in the last two years.[8]
Australia 	42%	Australia leads in providing adequate education.[8] However, six in 10 people still say more could be done.[8]
USA 	36%	People in the USA were the most satisfied with the facilities workplaces provide to support people living with hearing loss.[8]
Japan 	14%	In Japan, nine in 10 people believe additional education is needed in their country around preventing and treating hearing loss.[8]

A critical gap in awareness and access to services

There is an opportunity to educate the public and healthcare professionals on hearing loss, to close the gap in awareness and access to treatment. Only three in 10 people surveyed believe their country provides adequate education about preventing and treating hearing loss.[8]

Institutions have a role to raise awareness about hearing loss as part of overall health, and to increase our knowledge about treatments. For most countries, respondents saw government health bodies – and in some instances the government itself – as having a key role.[8]



PROVIDING SOLUTIONS

Hearing loss doesn't have to be an inevitable part of ageing, and you can limit your risk of hearing loss at any age by minimising exposure or wearing protection when needed.[1]

Check your hearing regularly. If you notice an issue,[5] speak to your health professional about treatment options, such as assistive listening devices, hearing aids, or cochlear implants.

Hearing loss impacts all of us. It affects our productivity, our health and our relationships,[1] but with a simple mind set change, we could challenge what sounds inevitable.

This report shows that people across the world believe hearing is incredibly important but could do more to take control of their hearing. It's time for the full community to prioritise hearing health to help keep our minds sharp[3,4,5,6,7] and stay connected to the world and people around us.

Don't age quietly.

A GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON HEARING LOSS

1 in 3

Adults **65+** are affected by disabling hearing loss[1]

1 in 2



People have a close family member with moderate to profound hearing loss[8]

PEOPLE BELIEVE HEARING LOSS CAN...

84%

Affect relationships[8]

66%

Lead to withdrawal and exclusion from society[8]

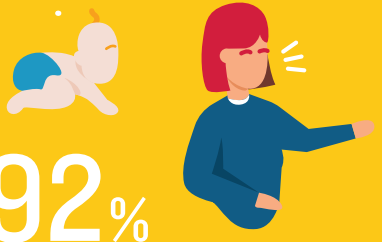
86%

Impact on communication with loved ones[8]



Reduce job prospects[8]

HEARING LOSS; SOUNDS INEVITABLE?



92%

think hearing is important to overall quality of life[8]



But,

71%

think hearing loss is an unavoidable part of ageing[8]



...which can lead to delays in prevention, monitoring and treatment.

YET, HEARING LOSS CAN OFTEN BE PREVENTED AND TREATED

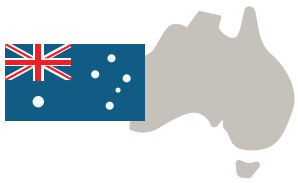
7 in 10
know where to get their hearing tested[8]

Yet...

Fewer than
4 in 10 have had their hearing tested in the last two years[8]

Getting a hearing test could be the first step towards better hearing and stronger social connections[3,4,5,6,7]

SO HOW DO WE COMPARE?



Australia

Strongest belief that hearing loss can affect relationships[8]



Japan

Strongest belief additional education is needed in their country around preventing and treating hearing loss[8]



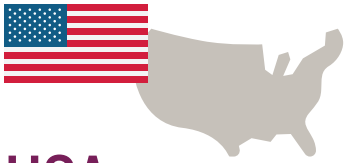
UK

People are least likely to have had a hearing test in the last two years[8]



Germany

People are most likely to know where to get their hearing tested[8]



USA

People in the USA rated workplace facilities higher than any other country[8]

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Hear now. And always

As the global leader in implantable hearing solutions, Cochlear is dedicated to helping people with moderate to profound hearing loss experience a life full of hearing.

We have provided more than 550,000 implantable devices, helping people of all ages to hear and connect with life's opportunities. We aim to give people the best lifelong hearing experience and access to innovative future technologies. We have the industry's best clinical, research and support networks.

That's why more people choose Cochlear than any other hearing implant company.

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Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always read the instructions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

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