THE STATE OF HEARING HEALTH

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GENDER DIFFERENCES?

Background

To gather information about U.S. adults’ hearing health, AARP contracted with IPSOS Public Affairs, LLC, to conduct this survey among adults ages 45 and older using its nationally representative online panel, KnowledgePanel®. The major impetus for this project was the recognition that hearing issues, left untreated, can lead to many other health problems later in life. We were interested to learn whether or not midlife and older adults know of the connection between hearing health and overall health and the extent to which they begin to (or fail to) take steps to address hearing issues when they arise.

Women More Likely To Consider Hearing Health Important

When asked to consider the hearing health of individuals ages 50 and older, of themselves, of their close friends and family members, and of the U.S. population in general, women are more likely to say they consider the hearing health of all four groups as extremely or very important.

Both Men and Women Consider Maintaining Hearing Health as Critically Important to Their Quality of Life

But women are more likely to consider hearing health as extremely important to their quality of life and men are more likely to consider it very important.
Majority Consider Hearing as Excellent, or Not in Need of Treatment

Four in ten respondents ages 45 and older rate their hearing is excellent, while about one-third say their hearing isn’t as good as it could be, but they don’t think it needs to be treated. Women are more likely than men to report their hearing as excellent, while men are more likely to say that they have hearing difficulty, but have—or have not—been treated for it.

Noise More Likely to be Troublesome for Men

In addition to being more likely to report having treated—or untreated—hearing difficulty, men are more likely to say they had a hearing test in the past five years and to report having discussed their hearing issues with their primary care physician or with an audiologist. Men are more likely to agree that hearing difficulties can negatively affect their familial relationships. Further, with the exception of having the feeling that many people seem to mumble (or not speak clearly), men are more likely to say that all of the items about which they were asked [graphic below] apply to them.
Very Low Ownership or Use of Hearing Devices or Technologies

More than nine in ten respondents say they do not currently own a hearing aid or hearing device, and even more say that they do not currently use other hearing assistive technologies. However, men are more likely to report currently owning a hearing aid or hearing device and currently using other hearing assistive technologies.

Knowing Someone with Hearing Issue Common; Recommending Help Less So

Women are more likely to both know someone with a hearing issue and suggest that they seek treatment. Among those who made such a suggestion, four in ten (or more) recommended their friend or family member go to a physician who specializes in hearing issues, to an audiologist, or to their primary care physician, with men more likely to recommend an audiologist.

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