

The Hearing Impaired & Deaf Population of New Zealand

- 10.3% of the population (390,600) report having a hearing loss of some degree.
- 9.8% of the non-institutionalised population (368,600) report having a hearing loss of some degree
- 6.6% of the population (250,300) report having a disability caused by hearing loss
- 0.7% of the adult population (2,620) report disability attributed to deafness
- National Audiology Centre figures show that about 8% of children start school with hearing loss. This is an improvement of about 3% over the last decade. The highest rate of school entrant hearing loss is among Pacific Island children (15%) closely followed by Maori children (13.5%). The failure rate of children of other ethnic groups is significantly lower (5%). Over the last decade there has been an improvement for Maori children of about 2%, and for “other” children 3%. There has been no improvement for Pacific Island children.
- 0.24% of children (2,800) wear hearing aids. Maori children are more likely than others to have permanent hearing loss requiring them to use hearing aids. The cause of this difference appears to be genetic.
- People over 65 are three times more likely to have hearing loss than younger adults.
- Men are much more likely than women to suffer from hearing loss. 90,400 more men than women report hearing loss, and 31,500 more men than women report disability caused by hearing loss.
- The difference in hearing problems between men and women starts from the age of 25.
- Comparing the NZ data with a large British study on hearing, it appears that the cause of the difference in hearing problems between men and women is occupational noise exposure.
- Because women live longer than men, the absolute numbers of men and women over 75 years with hearing loss are about the same.
- By far the greatest public health problem related to hearing loss is occupational noise.
- Between 1981 and 1996 there was a decrease in the proportion of people employed in potentially noisy sectors of the economy from 45% to 36% - so there is some hope that in the future not as many men will develop hearing loss.

Anne Greville
September 2001

Greville Consulting
PO Box 26 506
Epsom
Auckland 1030
New Zealand

Phone: 0800 87 11 00 or: +64 25 281 3072
Fax: +64 9 625 8546

email: greville@ihug.co.nz