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**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

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DEMOGRAPHICS OF HEARING LOSS

There is no definitive count of the number of Americans with hearing loss, and the literature presents different statistics concerning the overall incidence and prevalence of individuals with hearing loss. Data is often collected through voluntary surveying of the non-institutionalized population with participants who admit to having some degree of hearing loss. There are also no ongoing, clinical, annual studies of the number of people with hearing loss in the United States. However, ODHH can provide information from three (3) sources that are reputable in the field. Although this data does not match exactly, the conclusions are consistent with one another.

The National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) website reports that approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss. Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. Roughly one-third of Americans 65 to 74 years of age and 47 percent of those 75 and older have hearing loss.
<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/hearingloss/hearinglossdefined/01.html>

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association also provides statistics on the prevalence and impact of hearing loss. According to the ASHA website:

- Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition in older Americans, and it is the number one communicative disorder of the aged; between 25% and 40% of the population aged 65 years or older is hearing impaired .
- The prevalence of presbycusis rises with age, ranging from 40% to 66% in patients older than 75 years and more than 80% in patients older than 85 years. <http://www.asha.org/research/reports/hearing.htm>

Presbycusis is the loss of auditory sensitivity as a result of aging. Presbycusis occurs gradually as a person ages and can occur because of changes in the inner ear, auditory nerve, middle ear, or outer ear.

Information on the growth of the older adult population is available from the Population Division of the U.S. Census Bureau, which has developed statistics that project the increase in the number of older adults over the next forty years. As shown in the table below, there will be close to a 100 percent increase in the number of Americans over the age of 65 by the year 2040 and the numbers continue to increase significantly in the years that follow.

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Projections of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: 2010 to 2050

Sex and age	(Resident population as of July 1. Numbers in thousands)								
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
BOTH SEXES	310,233	325,540	341,387	357,452	373,504	389,531	405,655	422,059	439,010
Under 18 years	75,217	78,106	81,685	84,866	87,815	90,722	93,986	97,669	101,574
Under 5 years	21,100	22,076	22,846	23,484	24,161	25,056	26,117	27,171	28,148
5 to 13 years	37,123	39,011	40,792	42,490	43,858	45,170	46,743	48,664	50,697
14 to 17 years	16,994	17,019	18,048	18,892	19,796	20,496	21,126	21,834	22,728
18 to 64 years	194,787	200,597	204,897	208,678	213,597	221,266	230,431	239,933	248,890
18 to 24 years	30,713	30,885	30,817	32,555	34,059	35,695	37,038	38,234	39,538
25 to 44 years	83,095	85,801	89,724	92,612	95,242	97,962	101,392	106,366	110,862
45 to 64 years	80,980	83,911	84,356	83,510	84,296	87,608	92,000	95,333	98,490
65 years and over	40,229	46,837	54,804	63,907	72,092	77,543	81,238	84,456	88,547
85 years and over	5,751	6,292	6,597	7,239	8,745	11,450	14,198	16,985	19,041
100 years and over	79	105	135	175	208	239	298	409	601
16 years and over	243,639	255,864	268,722	282,014	295,595	309,084	322,265	335,328	348,811
18 years and over	235,016	247,434	259,702	272,585	285,688	298,809	311,669	324,389	337,437
15 to 44 years	126,644	129,351	134,078	139,325	144,157	149,051	154,301	160,992	167,455

Suggested Citation:

Table 2. Projections of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: 2010 to 2050 (NP2008-T2)

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/files/nation/summary/np2008-t2.xls>

Hearing loss in older Americans accounts for a large percentage of the changing statistics. However, as the Better Hearing Institute explains, individuals with presbycusis only represent part of the picture. On their website, the Better Hearing Institute provides general guidelines for understanding the prevalence of hearing loss across the life spectrum. Specifically:

- 3 in 10 people over age 60 have hearing loss;
- 1 in 6 baby boomers (ages 41-59), or 14.6%, have a hearing problem;
- 1 in 14 Generation Xers (ages 29-40), or 7.4%, already have hearing loss;
- At least 1.4 million children (18 or younger) have hearing problems;
- It is estimated that 3 in 1,000 infants are born with serious to profound hearing loss.

http://www.betterhearing.org/hearing_loss/prevalence.cfm

Furthermore, there has been an unexpected increase of individuals with hearing loss over the past six years due to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The largest group of veterans with service-connected disabilities is those with hearing loss. In 2008 nearly 70,000 service men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are collecting disability for tinnitus and more than 58,000 were on disability for hearing loss caused by IEDs, according to the VA. <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hioupdate/HIOWeeklyUpdate03142008.htm>. Currently, there are more than 445,000 veterans receiving compensation for hearing loss associated with military service, and 395,000 receiving compensation for service-related tinnitus. <http://www.noiseandhealth.org/article.asp?issn=1463-1741;year=2009;volume=11;issue=42;spage=14;epage=21;aulast=Saunders;type=0>