

**Clarity**  
**Final Report:**  
***Baby Boomer Hearing Loss Study***

Prepared by:

PRINCE  MARKET RESEARCH

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# Research Background & Purpose

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- ✦ Clarity, a Division of Plantronics, Inc. is the leading supplier of amplified telephones, notification systems, assistive listening devices and other communications devices for individuals with hearing impairments.
- ✦ The Ear Foundation is a national not-for-profit organization whose mission is to assist the public and the medical profession through education and research related to hearing loss.
- ✦ Through Seigenthaler Public Relations, Clarity and the Ear Foundation contracted with Prince Market Research (PMR) to conduct a research study among baby boomers (ages 41-60) that would focus on issues surrounding hearing loss.
- ✦ This survey serves as a follow up to a baseline study conducted in 2004. While that study (2004) focused on understanding the prevalence of hearing loss among baby boomers, this study (2006) really sought to better understand how their lives are being impacted by hearing loss.

# Research Methodology

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- ✦ A total of n=458 interviews were completed with a random group of respondents across the country. Participants were screened to ensure that only those in the 41-60 age range were able to participate.
- ✦ The research methodology included an online component and a telephone interview component. A total of n=353 interviews were completed online (via an online panel provided by MarketTools), and another n=105 interviews were completed via telephone, using a national random sample of households.

# Research Methodology

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- ✦ The overall margin of error at n=458 is +/-4.7%.
- ✦ The online survey was conducted from August 15 through August 28, 2006. The telephone interviews were conducted August 15 through August 21, 2006.
- ✦ The questionnaire in both cases included a total of 55 questions, including sub-questions (See Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire).
- ✦ The telephone interviews took on average 10-12 minutes to complete.

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# Key Findings

## Key Finding: *Half of baby boomers report some hearing loss*

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- ✦ About one-half (53%) of baby boomers said they have at least a “mild” hearing loss. This is consistent with the findings from the 2004 study (49%).
- ✦ It appears that boomers, generally speaking, are willing to admit to having a hearing loss. When looking just at those boomers that said they do NOT have a hearing loss, only 18% said they sometimes or frequently find themselves in situations where people are not speaking loudly enough or clearly enough or where the television is not loud enough or clear enough.

## **Key Finding: *Boomer men much more likely to have hearing loss***

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- ✦ In this study, men were significantly more likely to report a hearing loss than were women (62% to 38%).
- ✦ Furthermore, three-fourths of those that reported a severe hearing loss were men.



## Key Finding: *Hearing loss affecting home life of baby boomers*

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- ✦ Two-thirds said they have some trouble hearing the television.
- ✦ Most (75%) said they find themselves in situations where people are not speaking loudly enough or clearly enough or where the TV is not loud/clear enough for them.
- ✦ Watching TV with others in the room and social gatherings are the areas that respondents avoid most often due to their hearing loss.

## Key Finding: *Hearing loss affecting work/job for boomers*

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- ✦ One-fourth said their hearing loss affects their work – including 67% of those with a severe hearing loss and 42% of those with a moderate hearing loss.
- ✦ Among those that said their hearing loss affects their work somewhat or quite a bit, phone calls (64%) and conversations with co-workers (61%) are the areas most impacted by this.
- ✦ Despite the problems this creates at their workplace, fewer than 5% have actually asked their employer for help regarding their hearing loss.
- ✦ One-fourth said their hearing loss has had an impact on their earning potential.

## **Key Finding: *Boomers reluctant to admit impact of hearing loss***

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- ✦ Three-fourths of boomers with a hearing loss find themselves in situations where people are not speaking loudly enough or clearly enough or where the TV is not loud/clear enough for them.
- ✦ So even though they admit to having some problems hearing, most (75%) still insist it has no effect on their job performance.
- ✦ This may explain why fewer than 5% have actually asked their employer for help regarding their hearing loss.

## Key Finding: *Boomers are not seeking solutions for hearing loss*

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- ✦ Just 26% of those with a hearing loss have had their hearing loss formally diagnosed by a medical professional – and 37% have not even had their hearing tested.
- ✦ Even among those with a severe hearing loss, only 42% wear hearing aids.
- ✦ Most of those that do not wear a hearing aid even though a hearing professional recommended they wear one said cost and/or lack of insurance coverage is the main reason they don't wear one.
- ✦ Very few – less than 5% – have actually asked their employer for help regarding their hearing loss.

## Key Finding: *Boomers have problems hearing on cell phones*

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- ✦ Over one-half (57%) of boomers with cell phones said they have trouble hearing on their cell phone.
- ✦ Those have problems hearing on their cell phone point to a variety of reasons – 30% said the problem is mostly their hearing, 23% said it's mostly their network, 22% said it's mostly the volume on the phone, and 25% don't know.
- ✦ Forty percent (40%) of those that have problems hearing on their cell phone said they would probably use their cell phone a little more often (21%) or a lot more often (19%) if they could hear conversations more clearly when using it.

## **Detailed Findings**

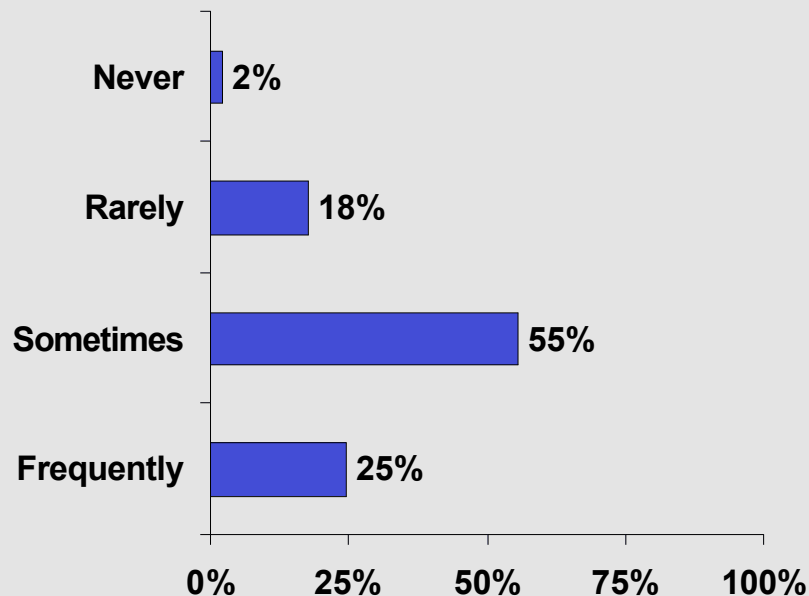
***Qualified Sample: n=458***

***Must have mild, moderate, or severe hearing loss to qualify***

Note: Not all percentages will equal 100%  
due to rounding of individual answers.

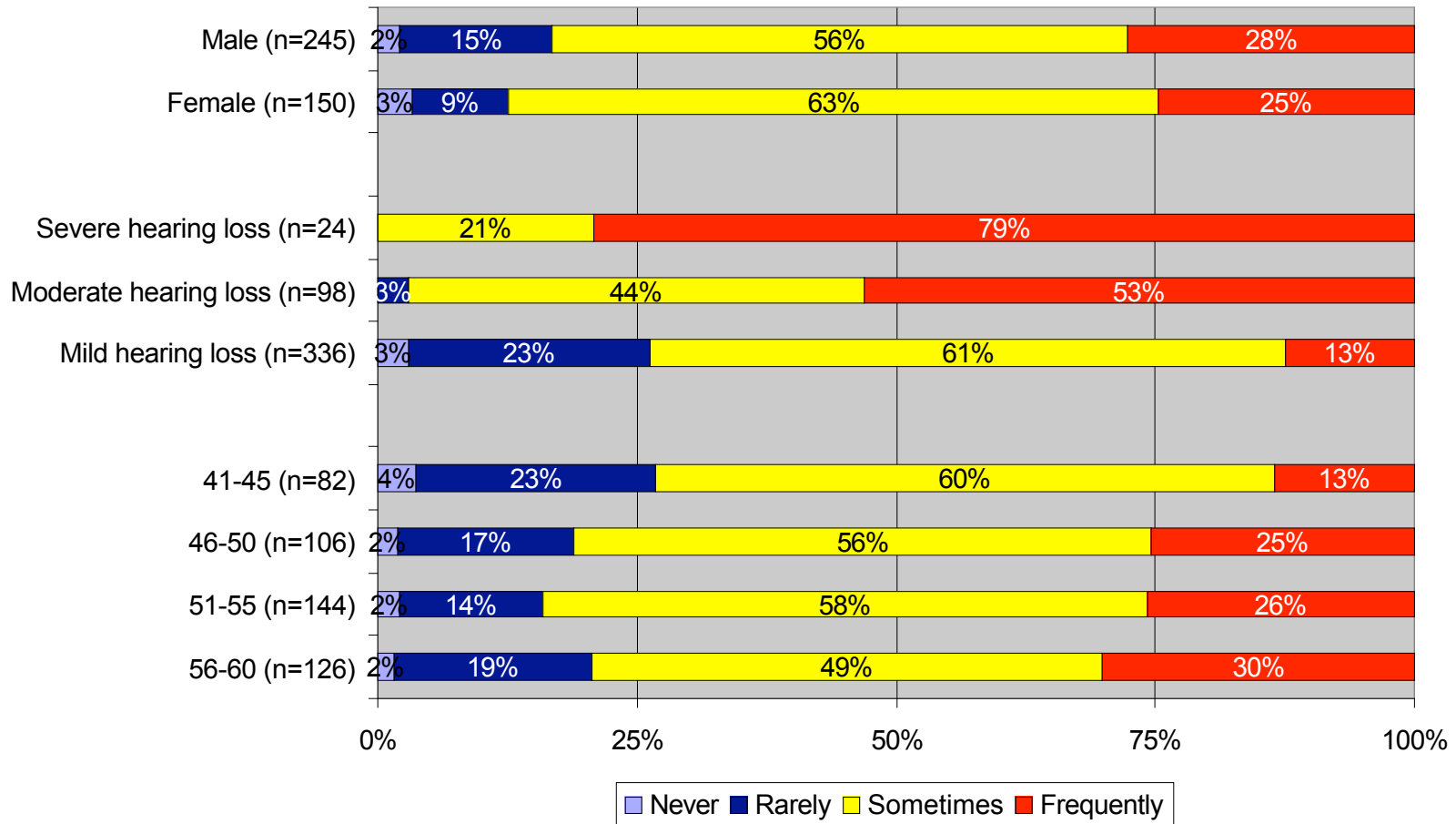
# Frequency of Hearing Issues

✦ **Q: How often do you find yourself in situations where people are not speaking loudly enough or clearly enough for you or where the TV is not loud enough or clear enough for you?**



✦ Among all qualifiers – baby boomers that said they had a mild, moderate, or severe hearing loss – 25% said they Frequently find themselves in situations where people are not speaking loudly enough or clearly enough or where the TV is not loud/clear enough for them. Another 55% said this happens Sometimes.

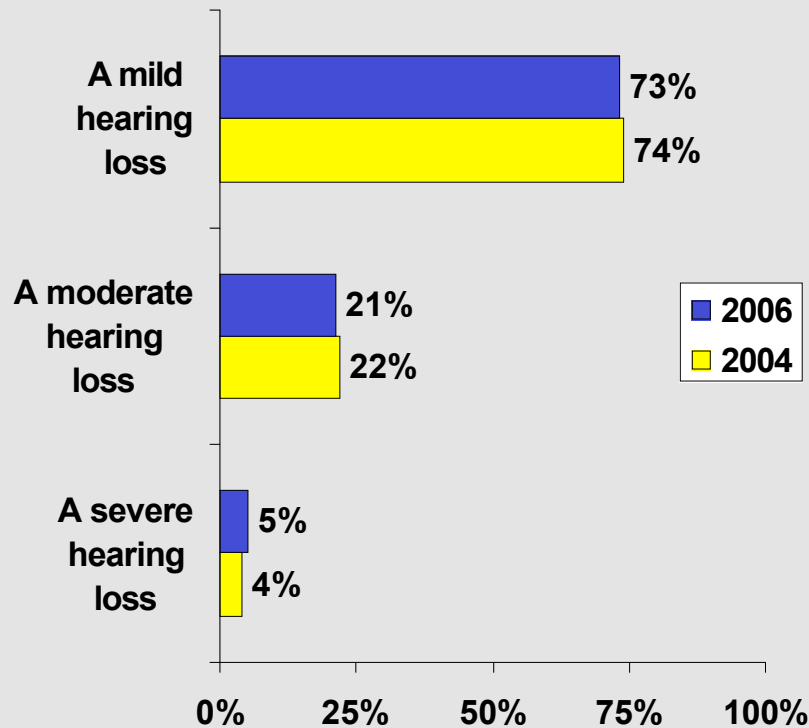
# Frequency of Hearing Issues





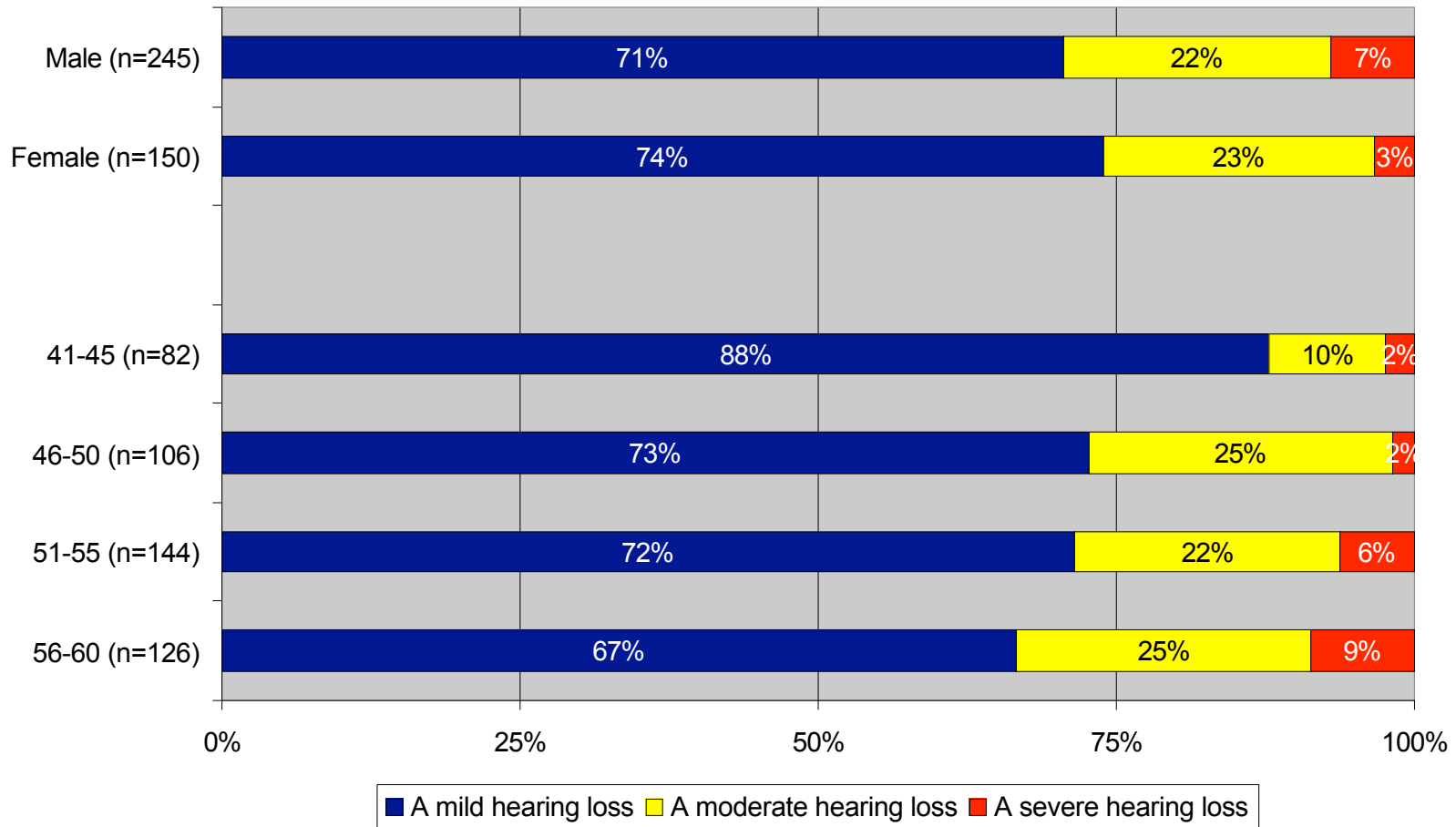
# Degree of Hearing Loss

✦ *Q: Do you consider yourself someone who experiences...*



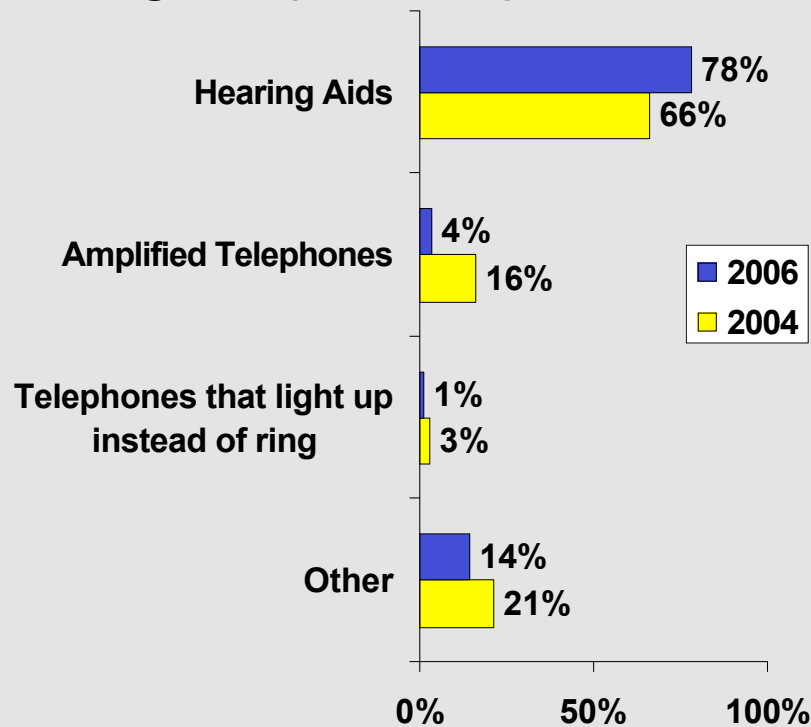
✦ The severity of hearing loss among boomers that said they have a hearing loss has not changed since 2004. Nearly three-fourths (73%) still say their hearing loss is Mild, while 21% classify it as Moderate and 5% say it is Severe.

# Degree of Hearing Loss (2006)



# Awareness of Products (UNAIDED)

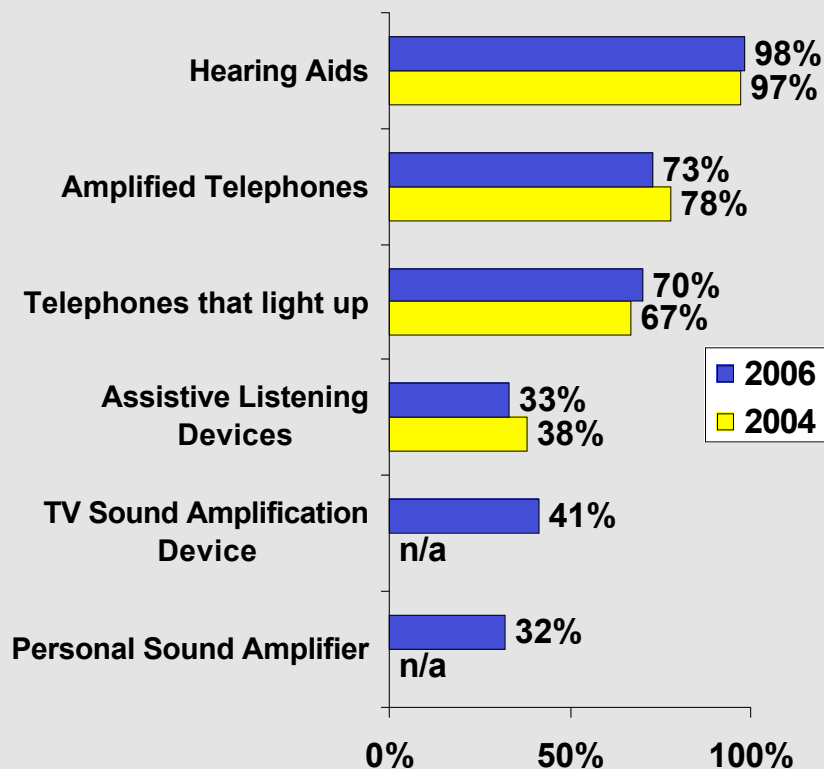
✦ **Q: What kinds of products can you think of that would potentially be of help to someone experiencing a hearing loss (UNAIDED)?**



- ✦ Hearing aids (78%) were again the most mentioned product.
- ✦ Unaided awareness of all other “hearing loss products” was very low, with only Amplified Telephones (4%) being mentioned by more than 1% of respondents.

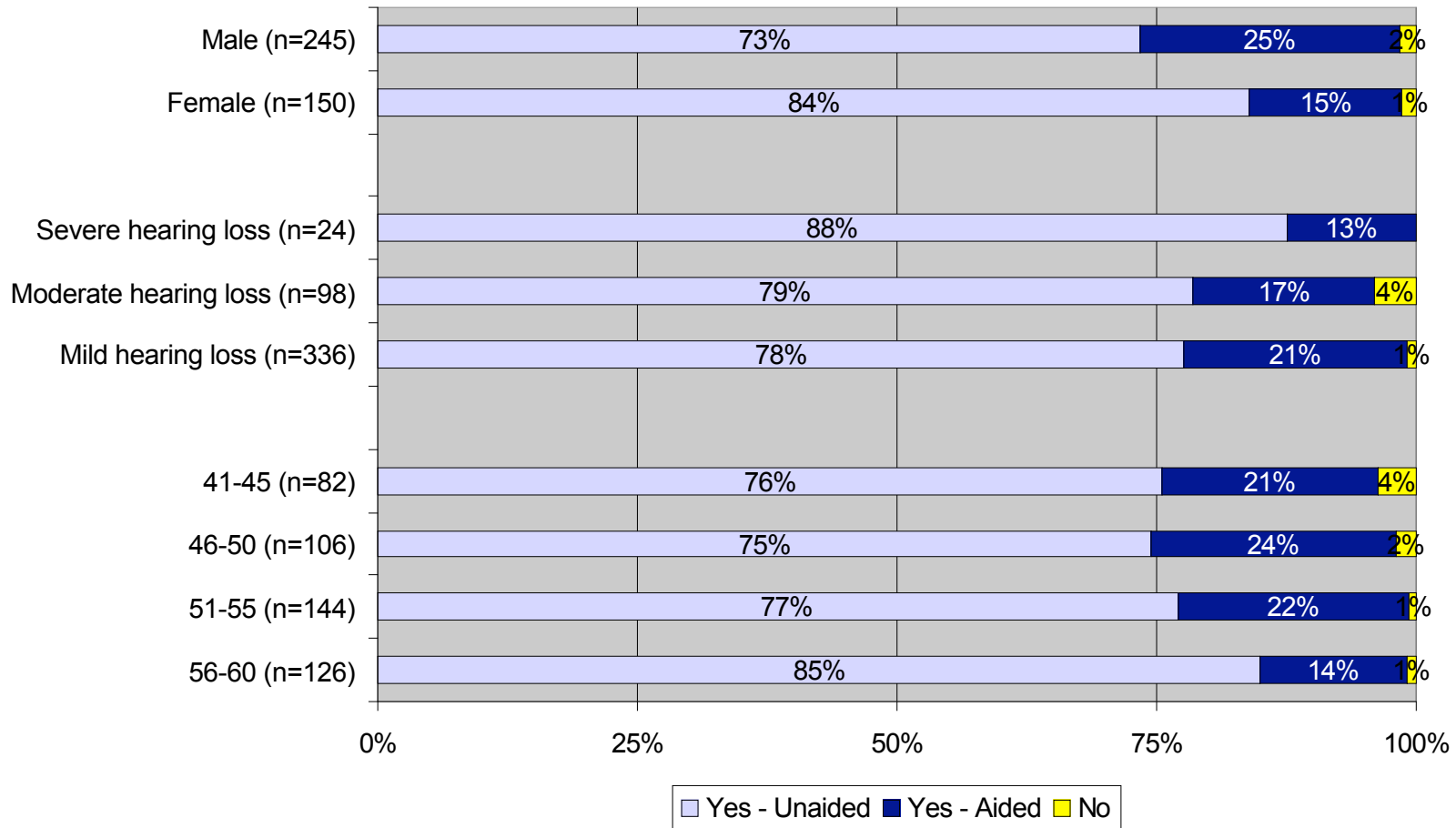
# Awareness of Products (AIDED+UNAIDED)

✦ **Q: Have you ever heard of... (AIDED + UNAIDED)?**

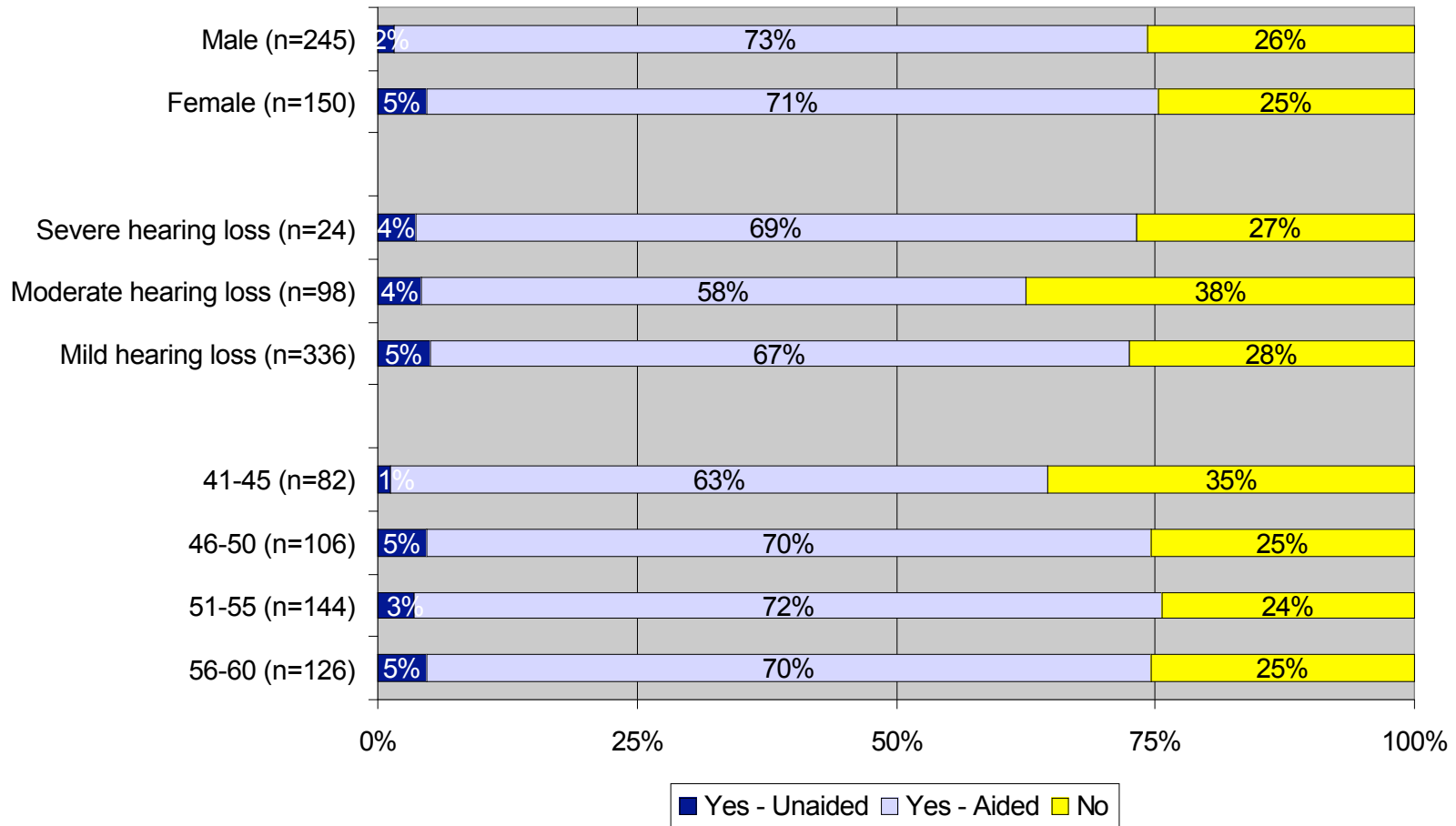


- ✦ There was very little movement in overall awareness numbers since 2004; Hearing Aids (98%) is still the most frequently recalled (aided + unaided) product that could be of help to someone experiencing a hearing loss.
- ✦ Amplified Telephones (73%) and Telephones that Light Up (70%) were also relatively well known, while Assistive Listening Devices (33%) are still not very well known.

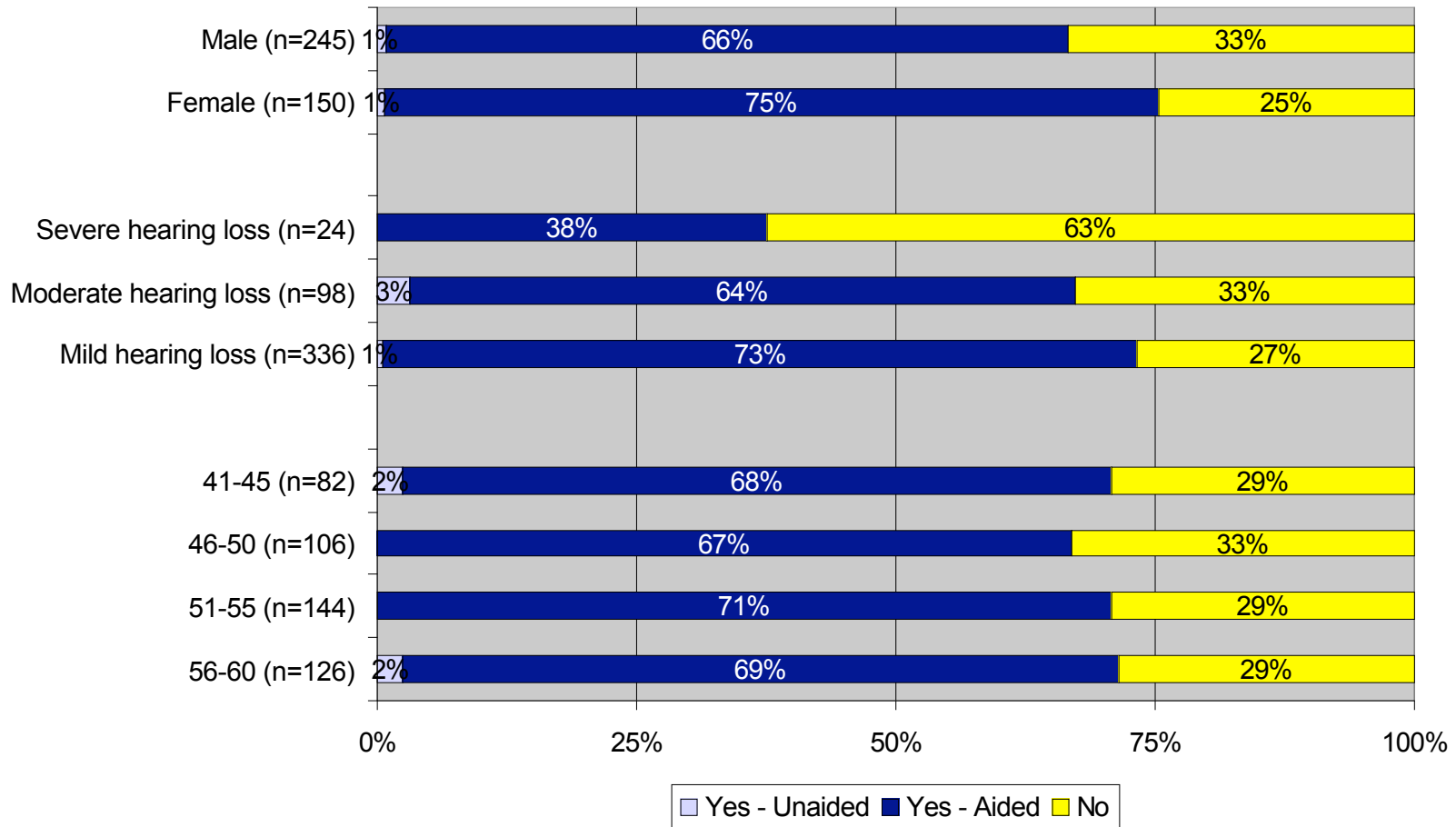
# Awareness of Hearing Aids



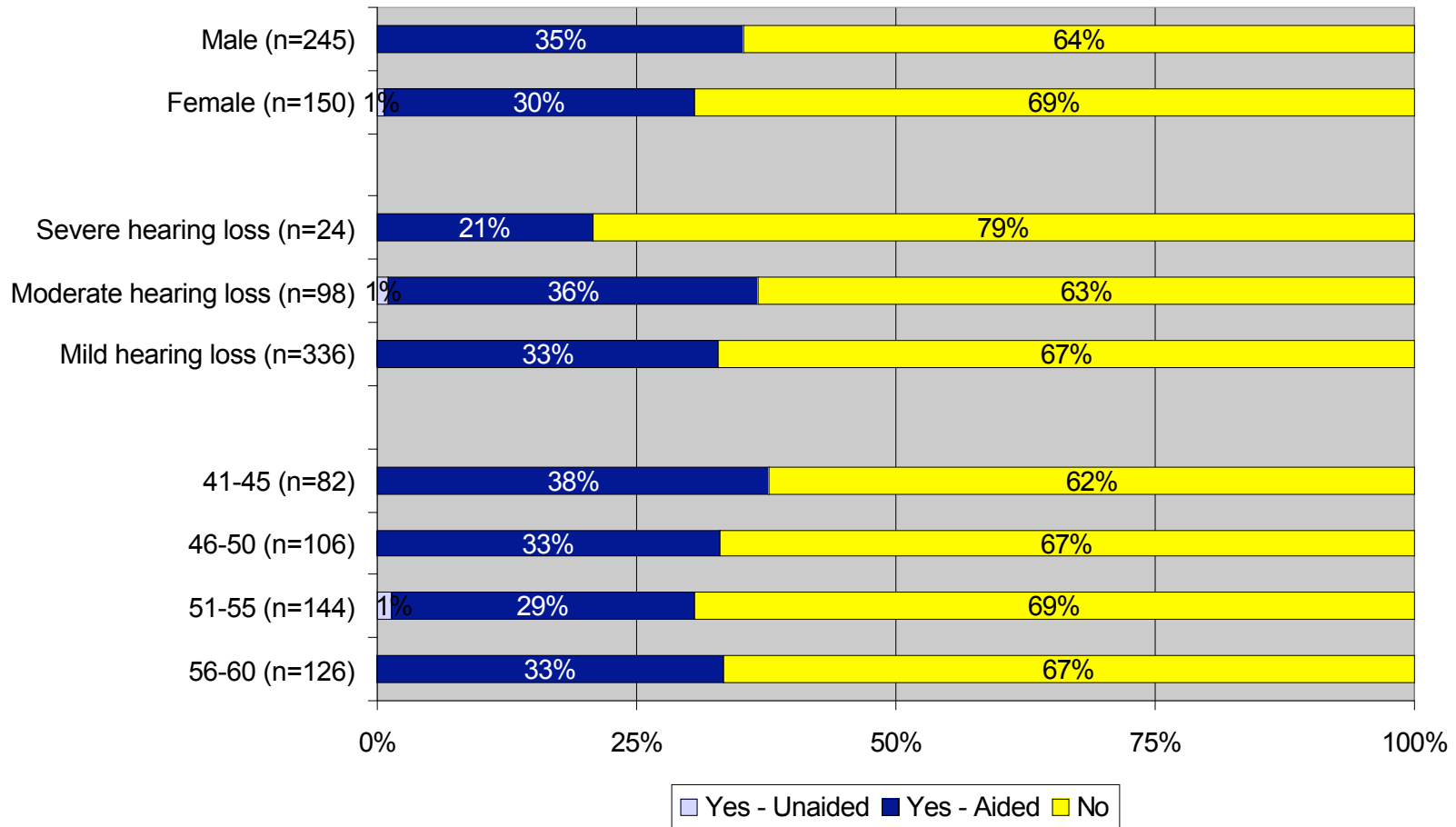
# Awareness of Amplified Telephones



# Awareness of Telephones that Light Up

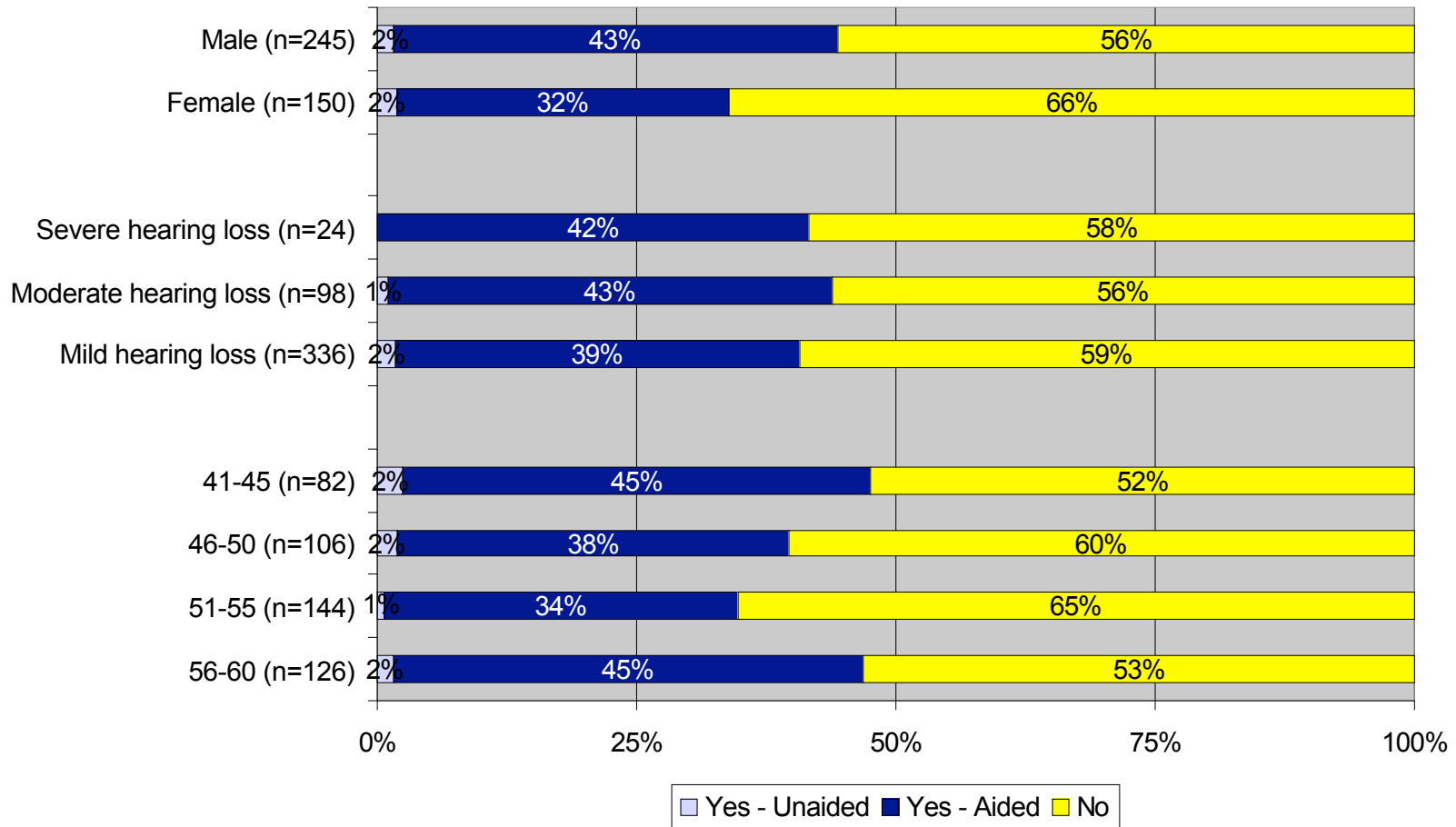


# Awareness of Assistive Listening Devices

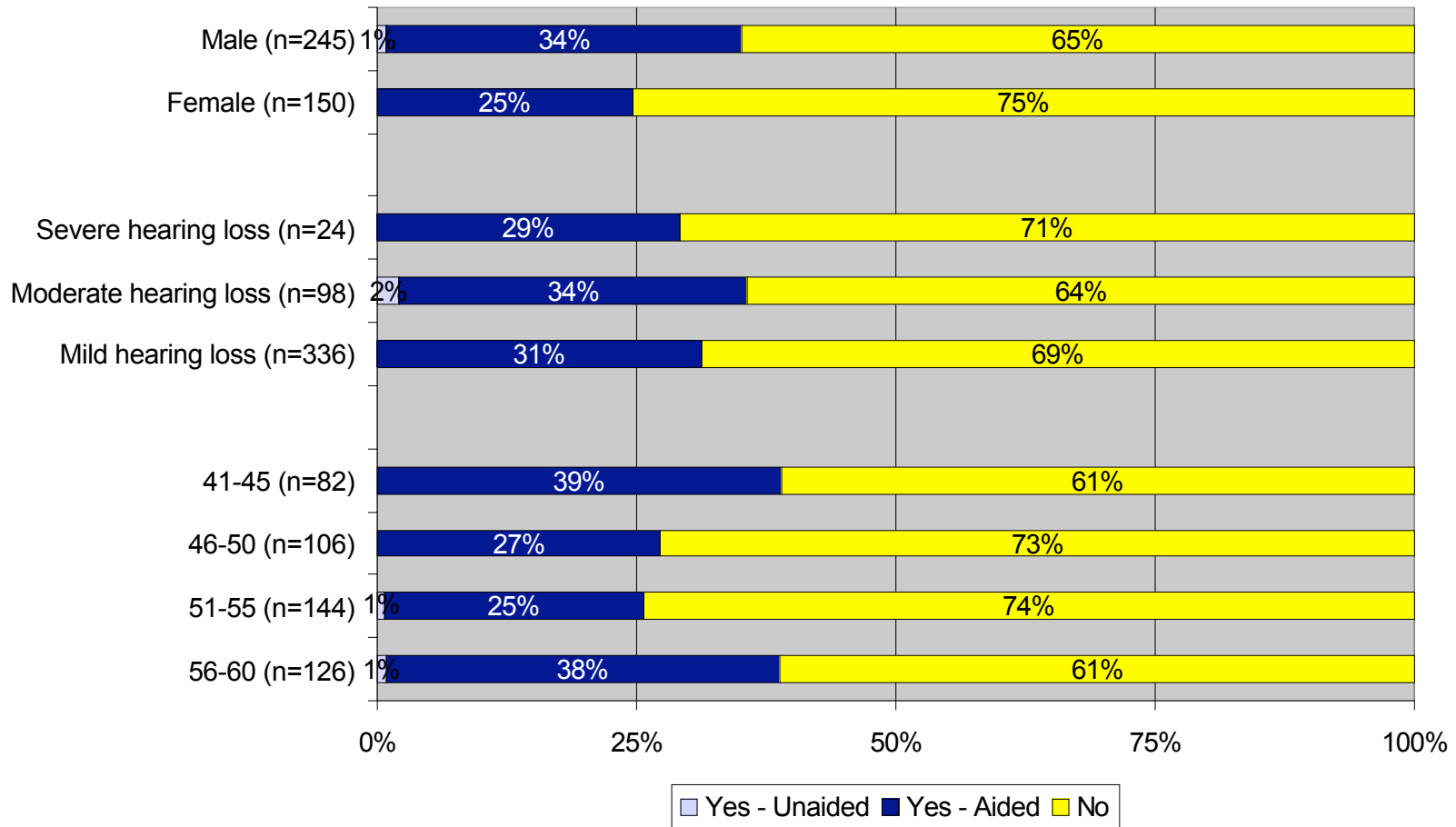




# Awareness of TV Sound Amplification Device

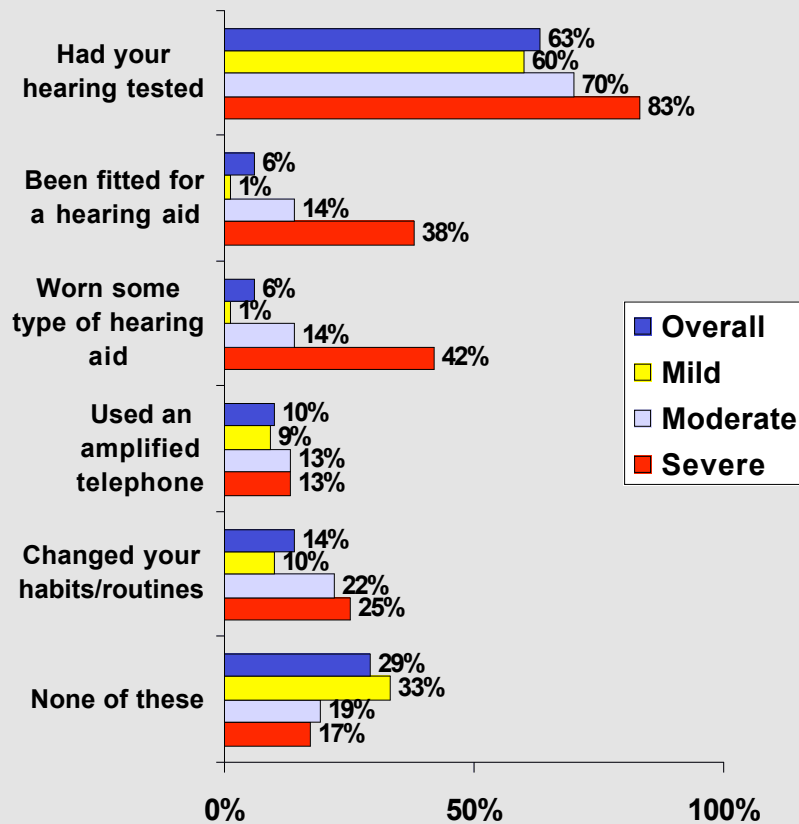


# Awareness of TV Personal Sound Amplifier



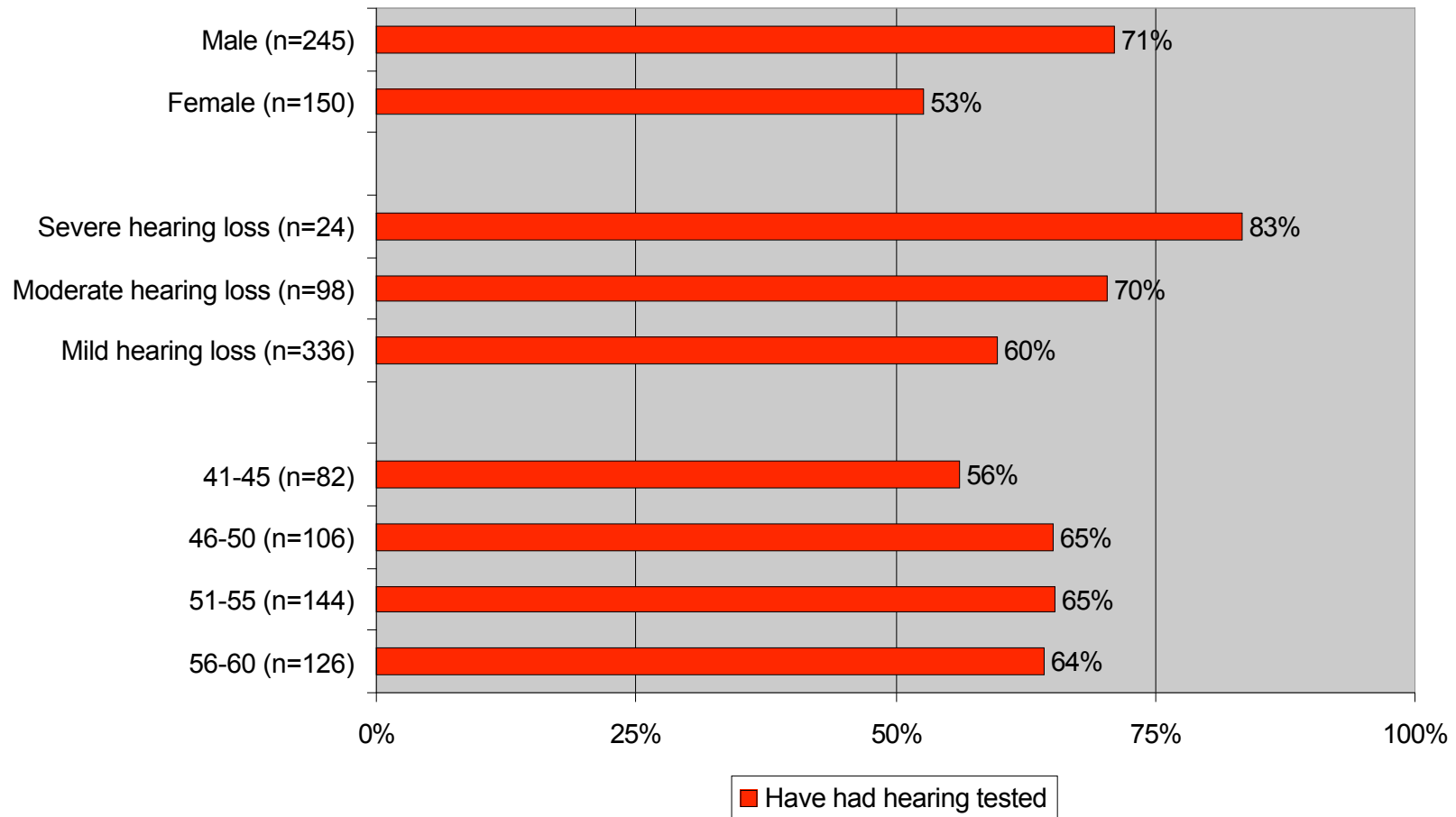
# Steps Taken Regarding Hearing Loss

✦ **Q: Have you done any of the following things?**

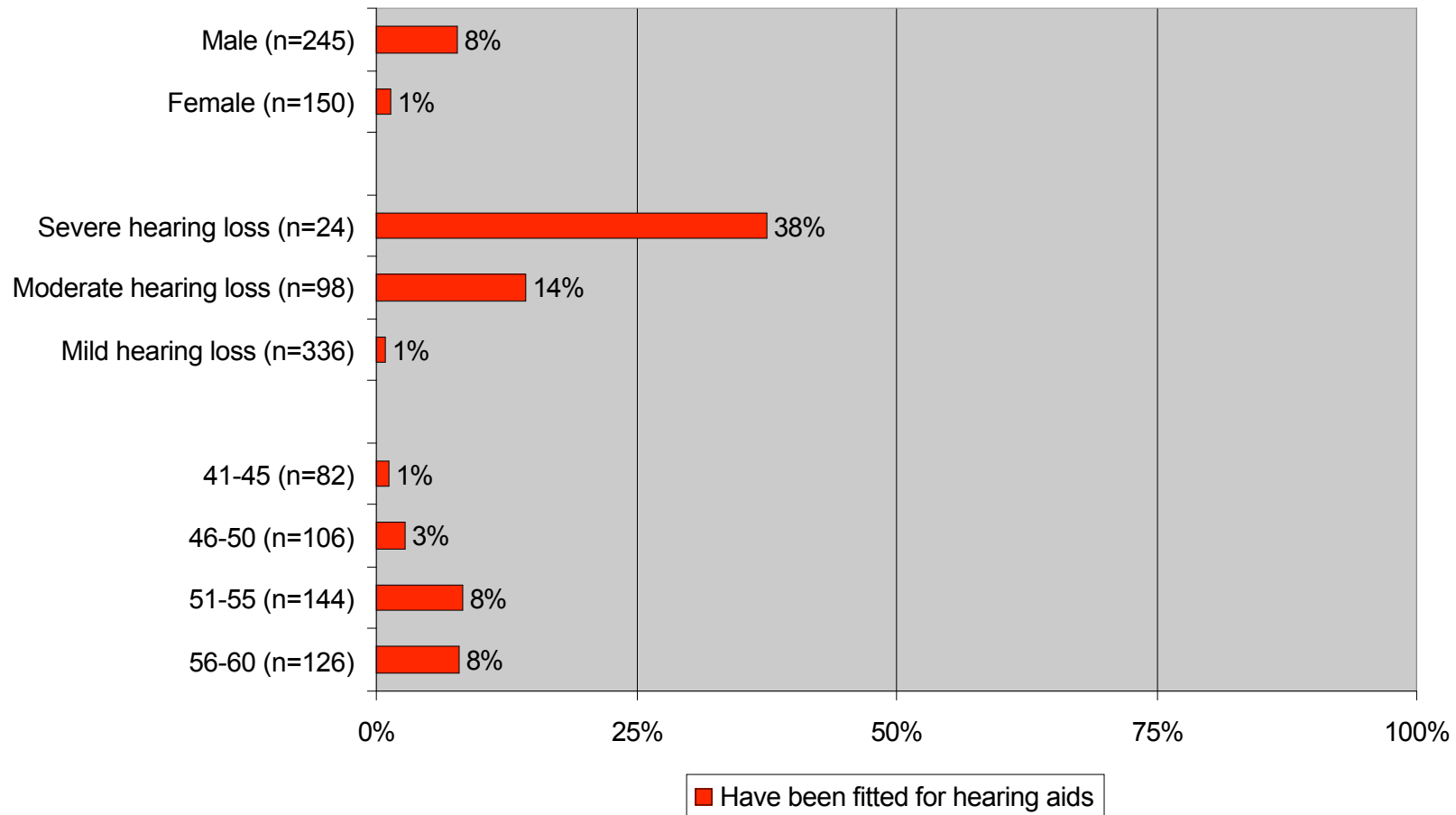


- ✦ Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents have had their hearing tested.
- ✦ As the hearing loss worsens, there is an increased incidence of having their hearing tested, being fitted for a hearing aid, wearing a hearing aid, and changing habits/routines.

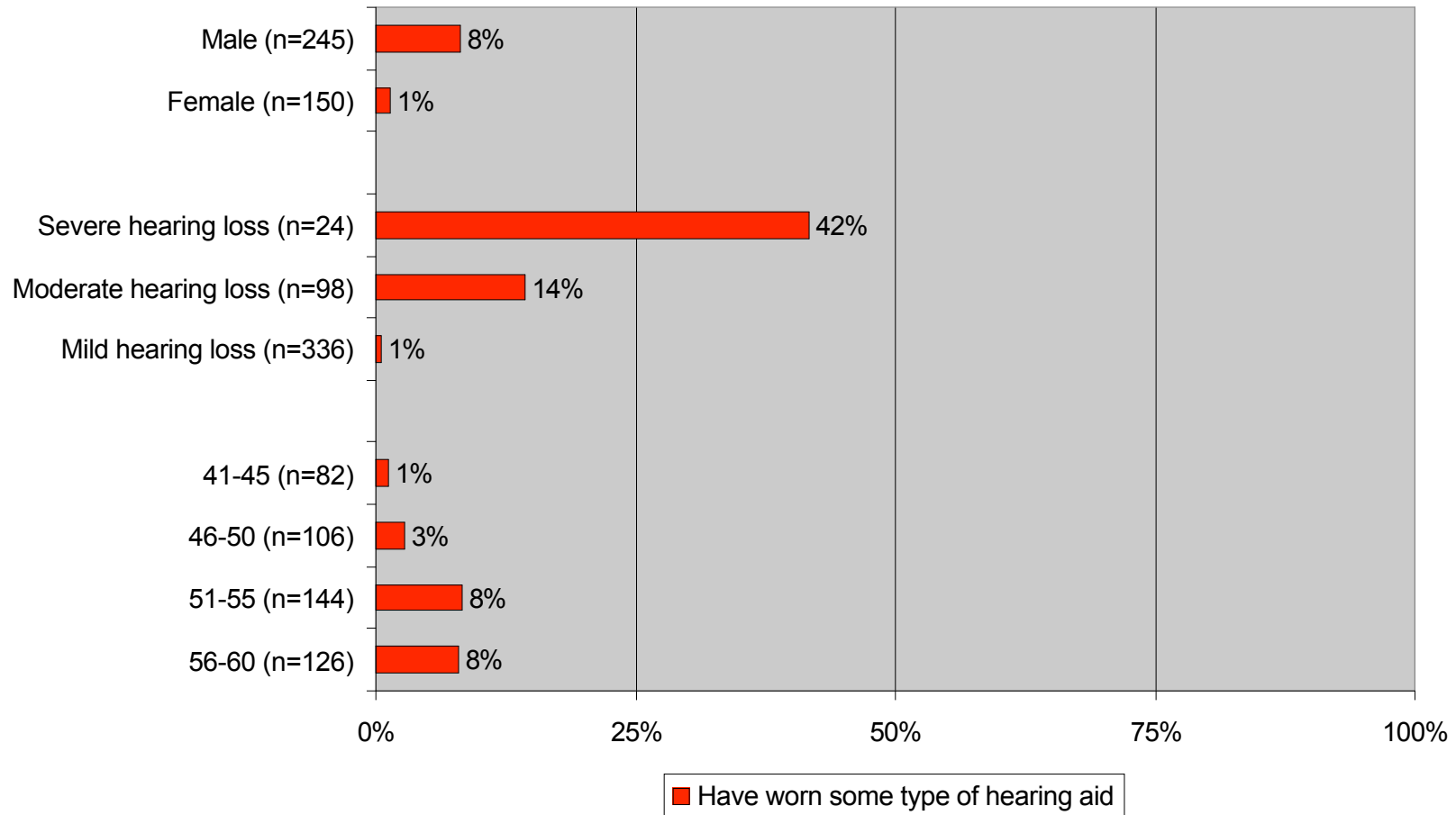
# Steps Taken: Had Hearing Tested



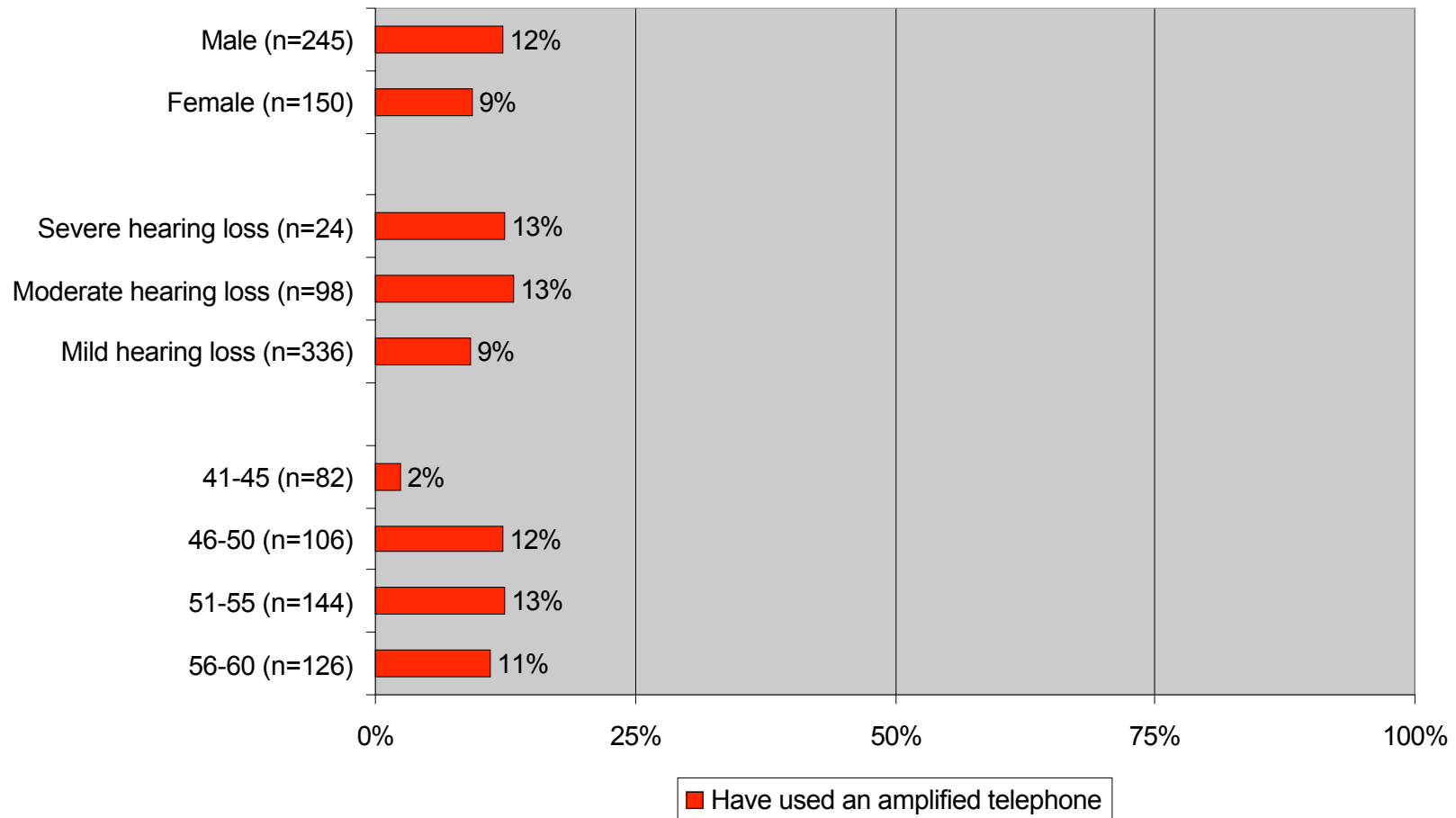
# Steps Taken: Been Fitted for Hearing Aid



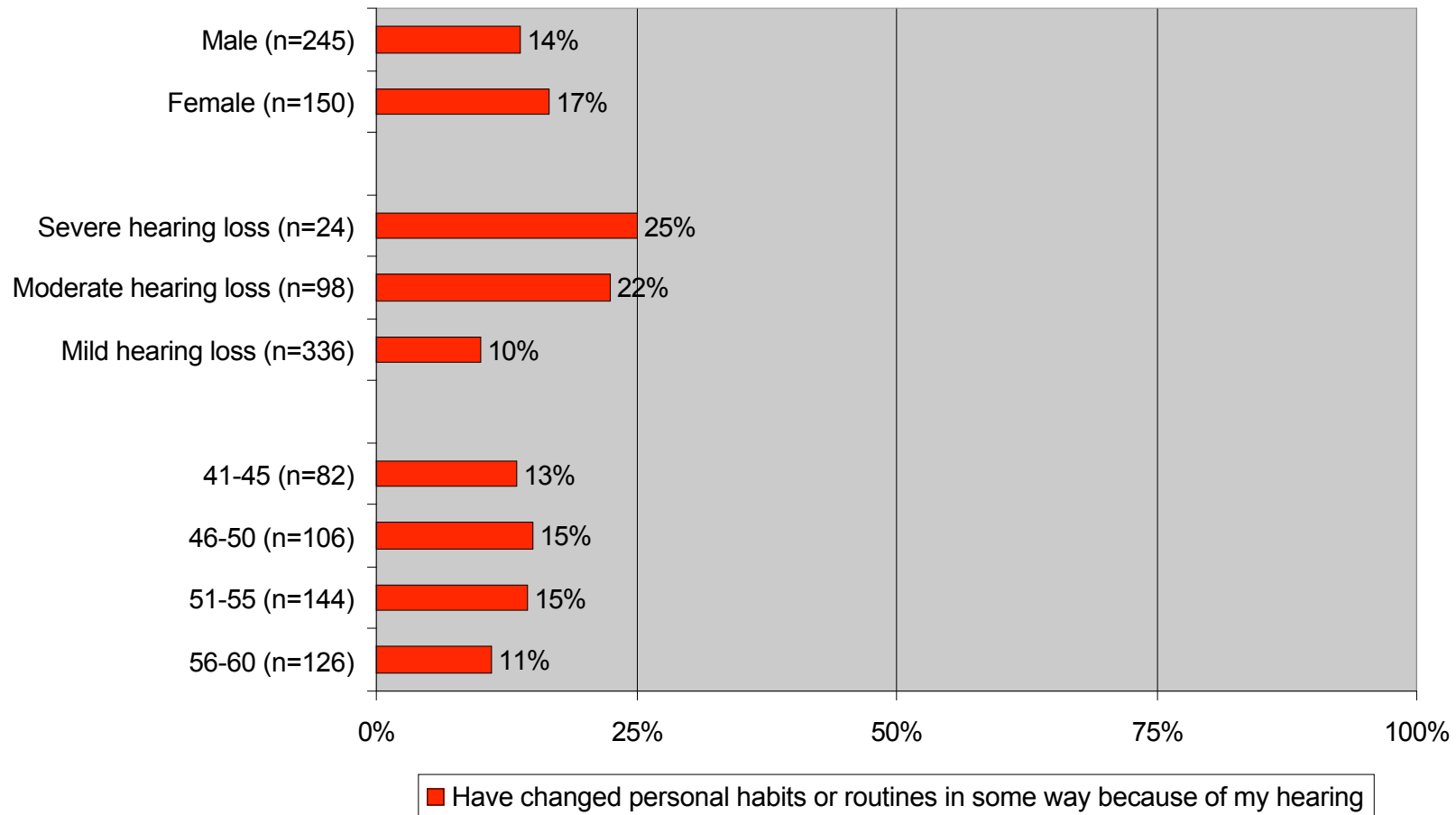
# Steps Taken: Worn Some Type of Hearing Aid



# Steps Taken: Used an Amplified Telephone

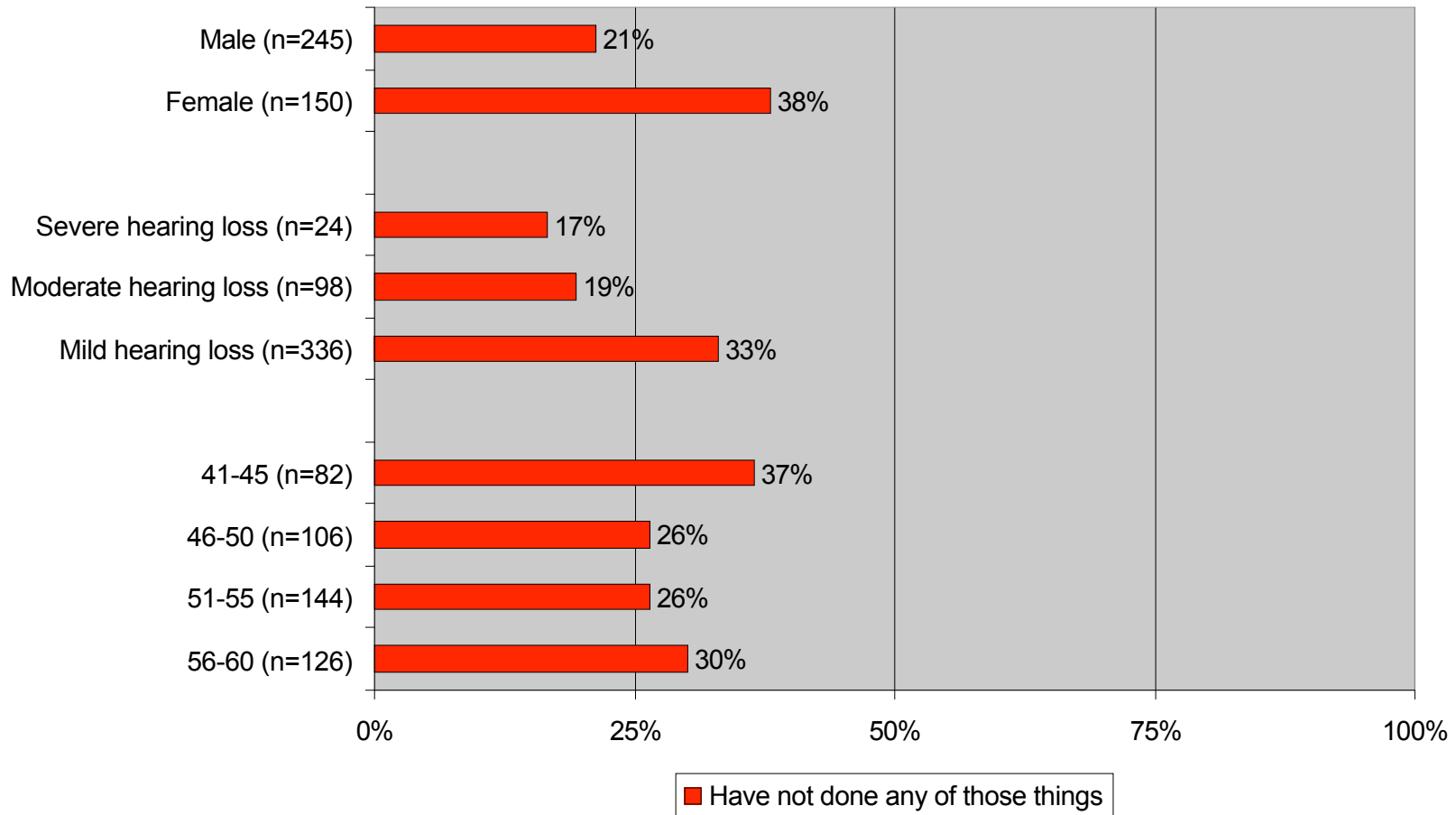


# Steps Taken: Changed Personal Habits





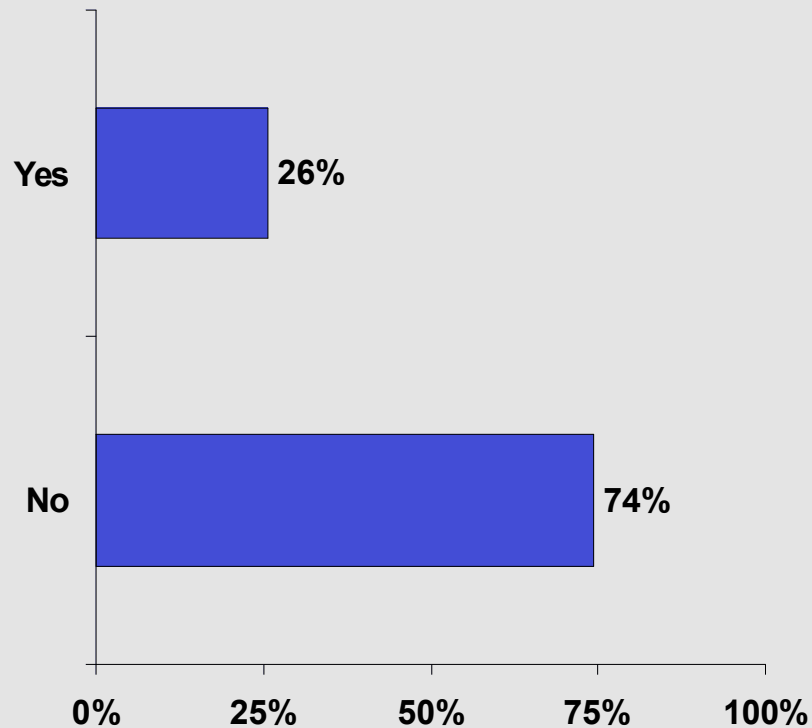
# Steps Taken: None



# Diagnosed with Hearing Loss

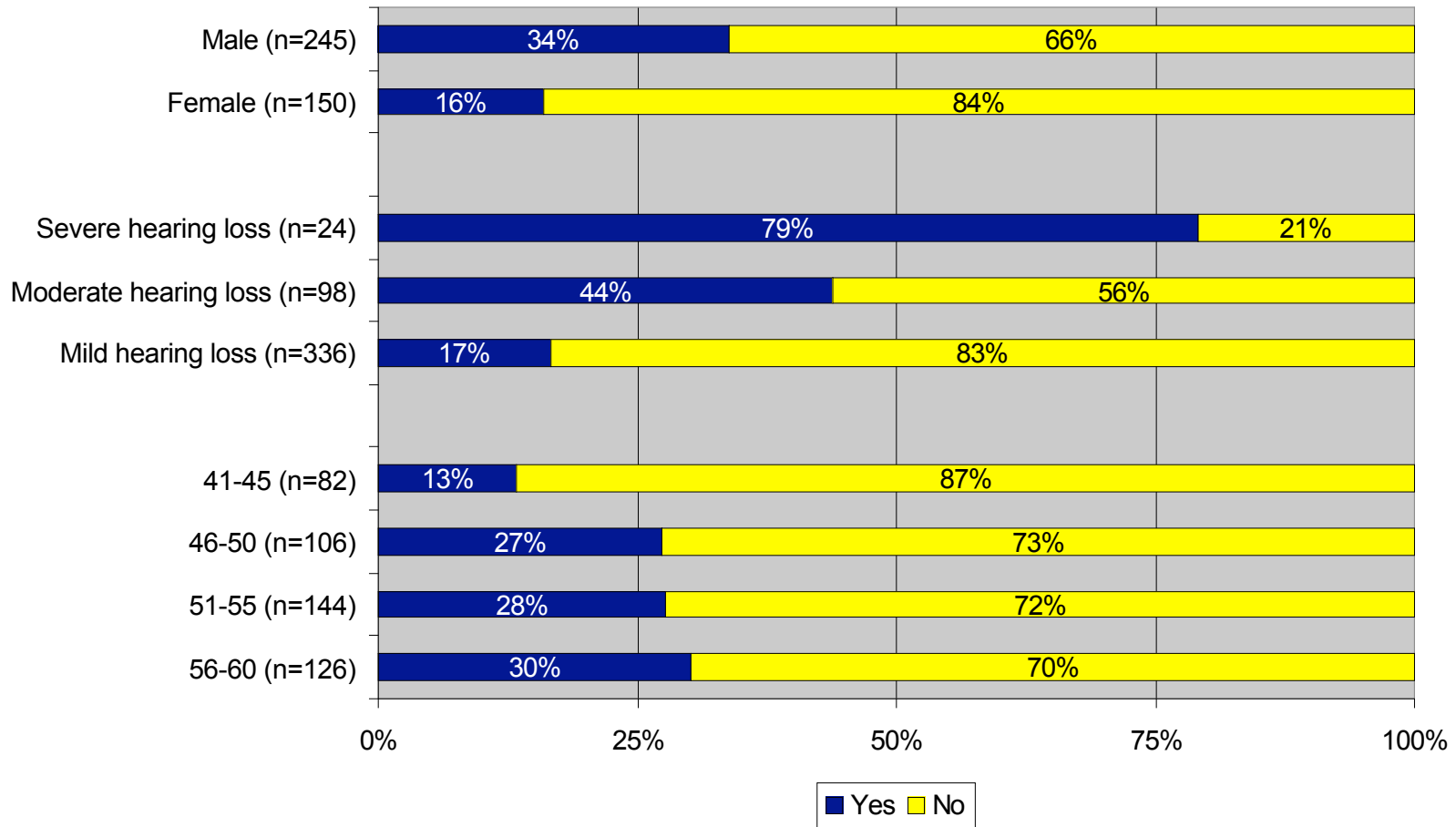
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✦ **Q: Have you ever been diagnosed with a hearing loss by a medical professional?**



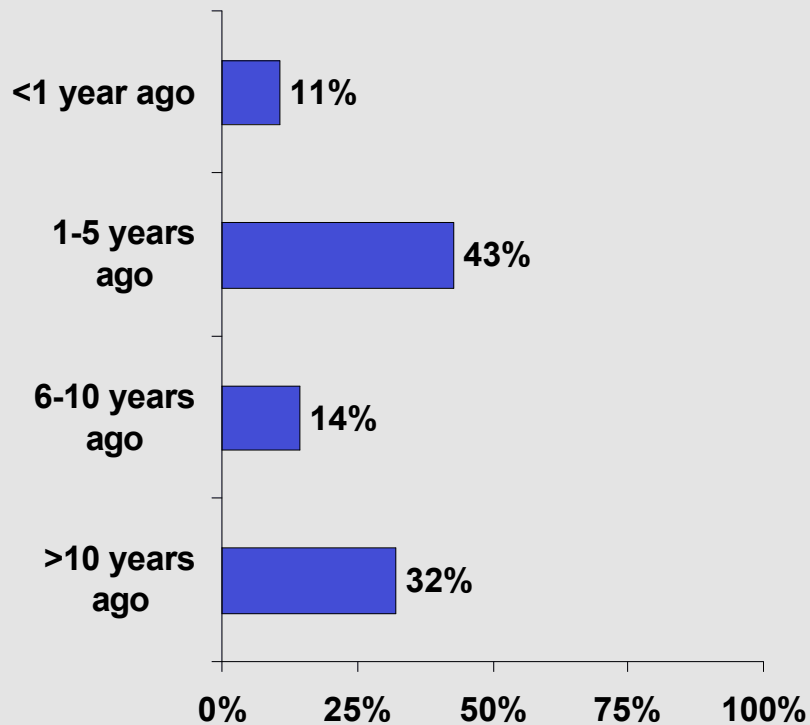
✦ Overall, 26% have been diagnosed with a hearing loss by a medical professional.

# Diagnosed with Hearing Loss



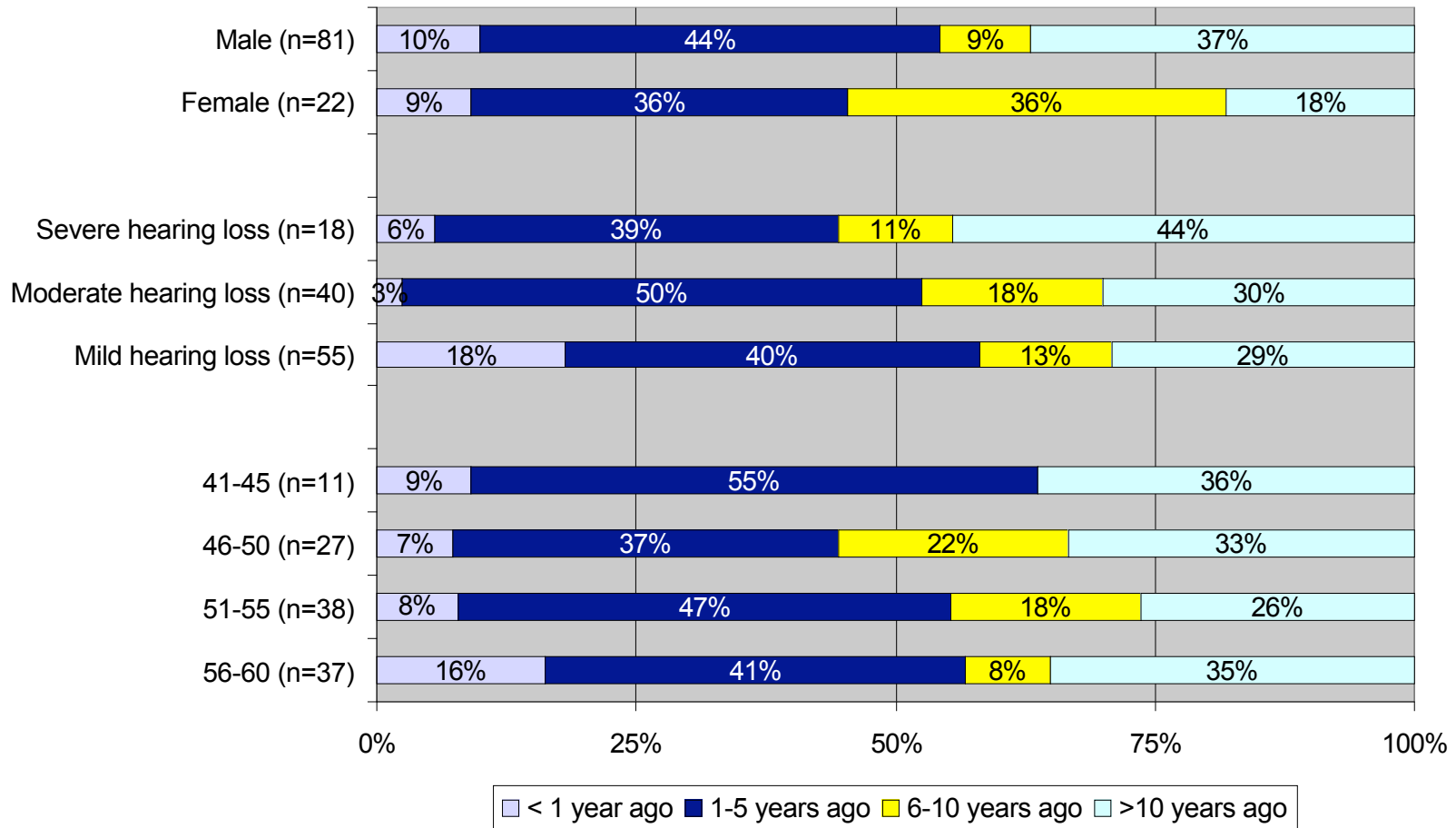
# Time of Diagnosis

✦ *Q: If yes, how long ago?*



- ✦ More than one-half (54%) of those who have been diagnosed with a hearing loss received this diagnosis sometime in the last 5 years.
- ✦ Nearly one-third (32%), though, were diagnosed with a hearing loss over 10 years ago.
- ✦ One in nine (11%) have been diagnosed within the last year.

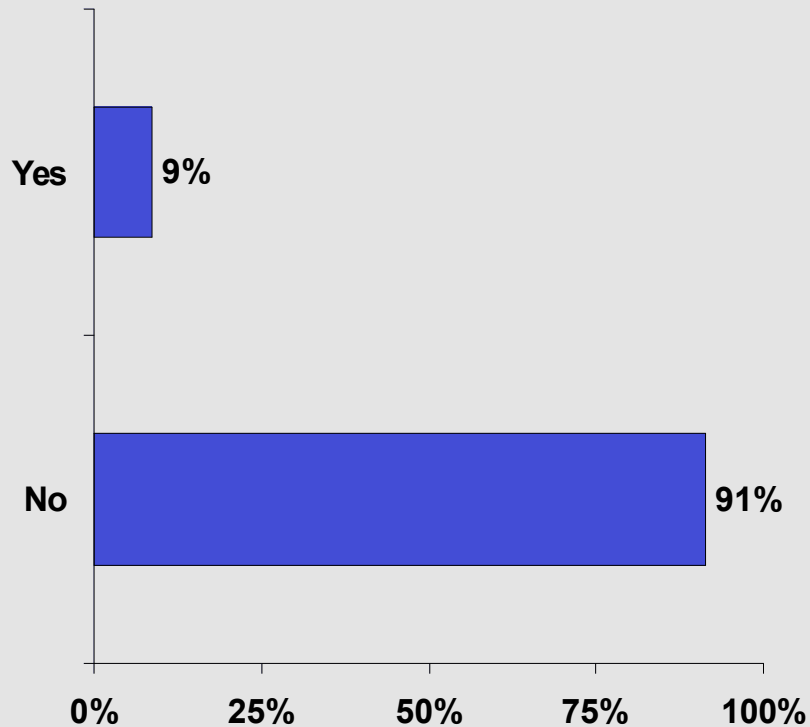
# Time of Diagnosis



# Hearing Aid Recommended

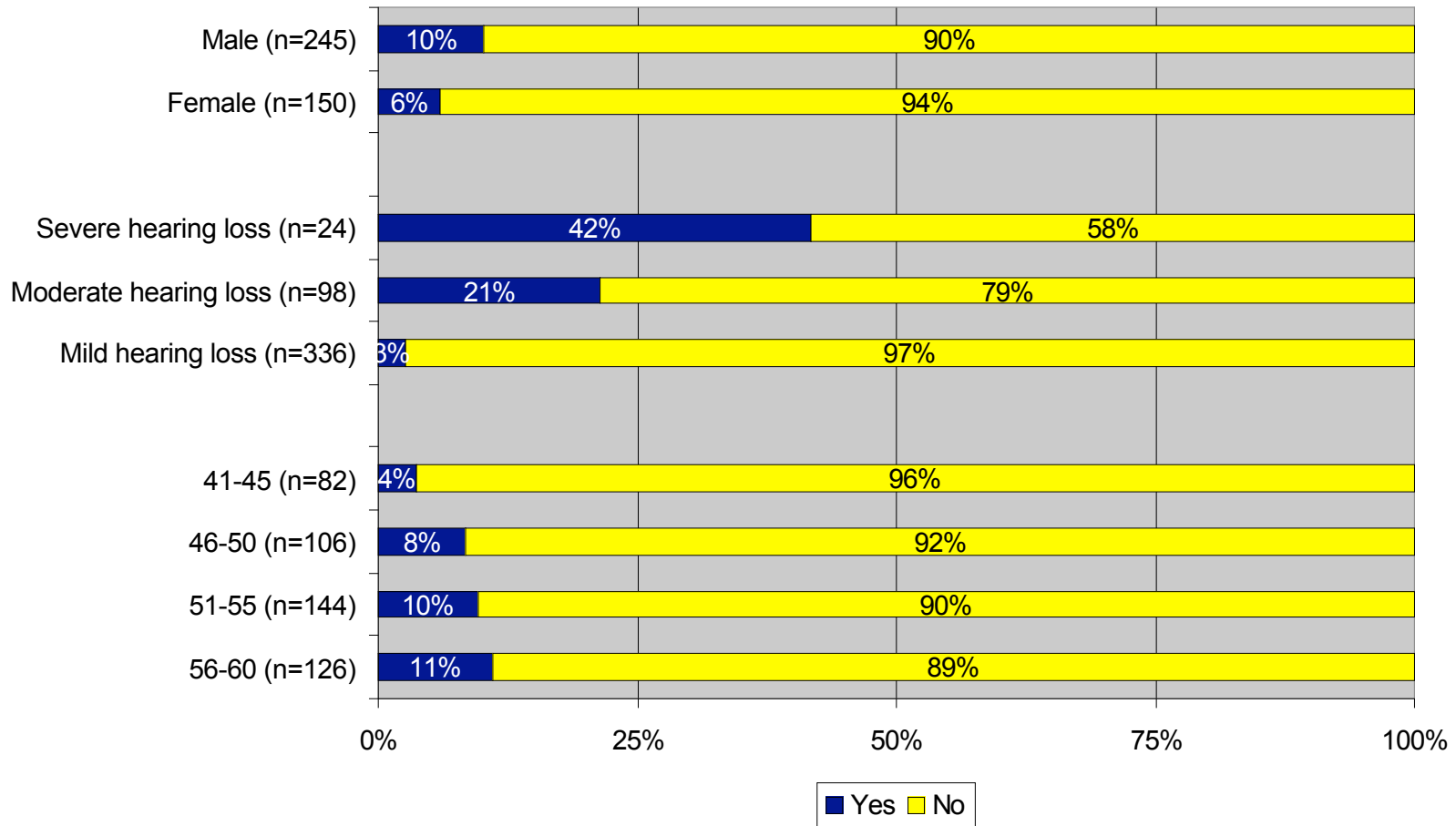
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✦ **Q: Has a doctor or other hearing professional ever recommended that you wear a hearing aid?**



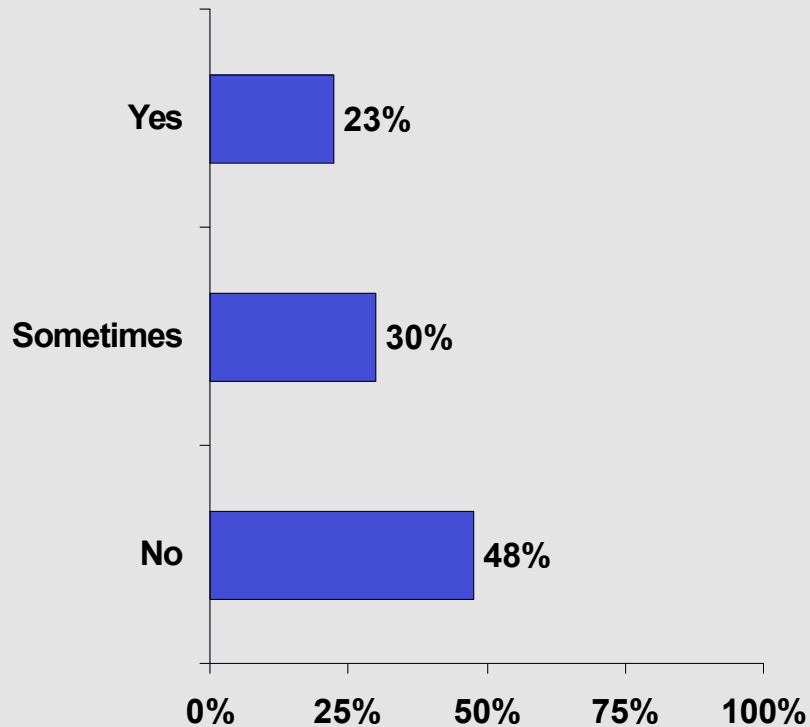
✦ Just 9% of respondents said their doctor or another hearing professional has recommended they wear a hearing aid.

# Hearing Aid Recommended



# Wear a Hearing Aid

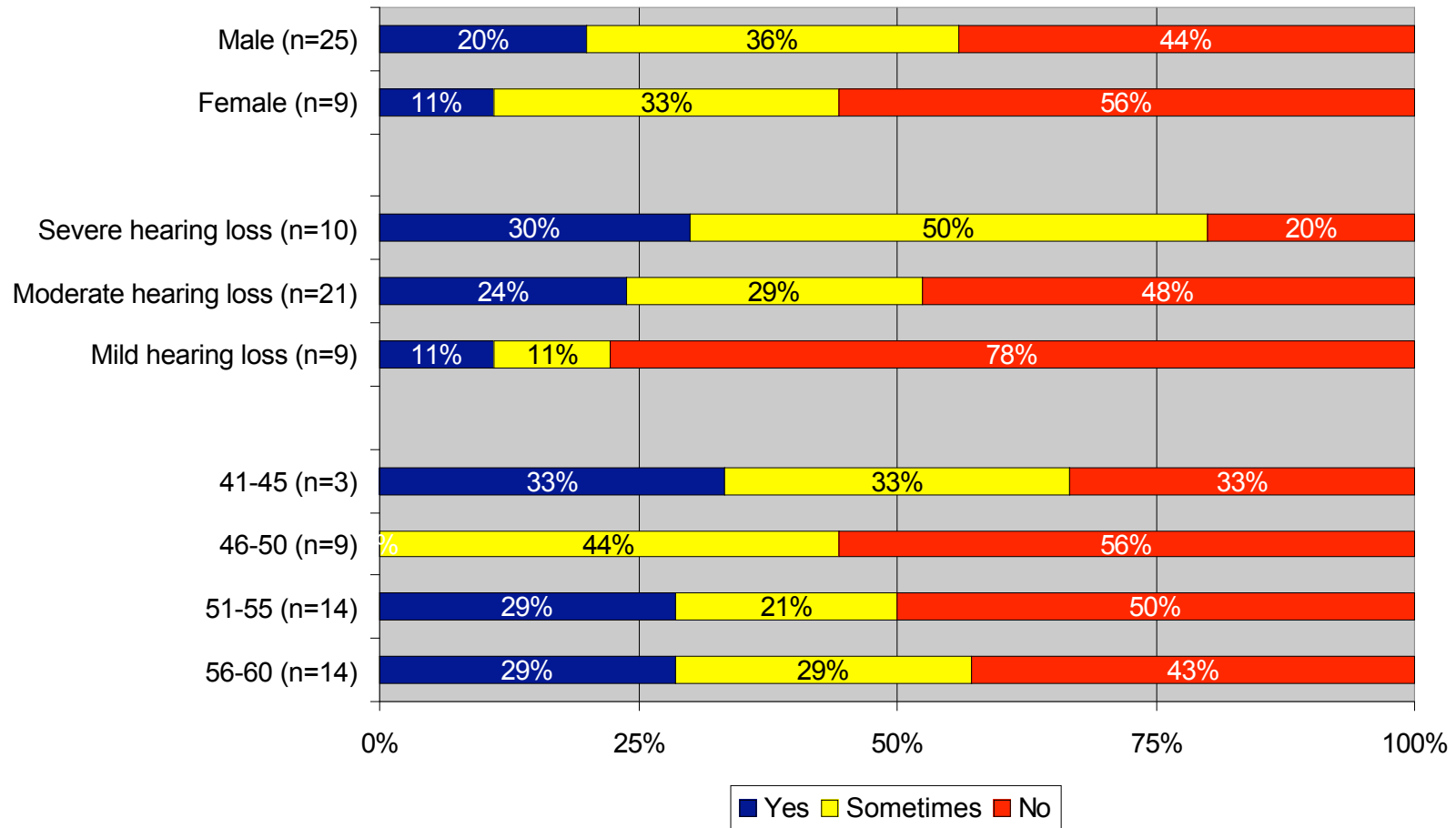
✦ **Q: (IF YES) Do you wear a hearing aid?**



✦ Fewer than one-fourth (23%) that have been told by their doctor that they should wear a hearing aid actually are wearing a hearing aid. Another 30% said they wear a hearing aid “sometimes.”

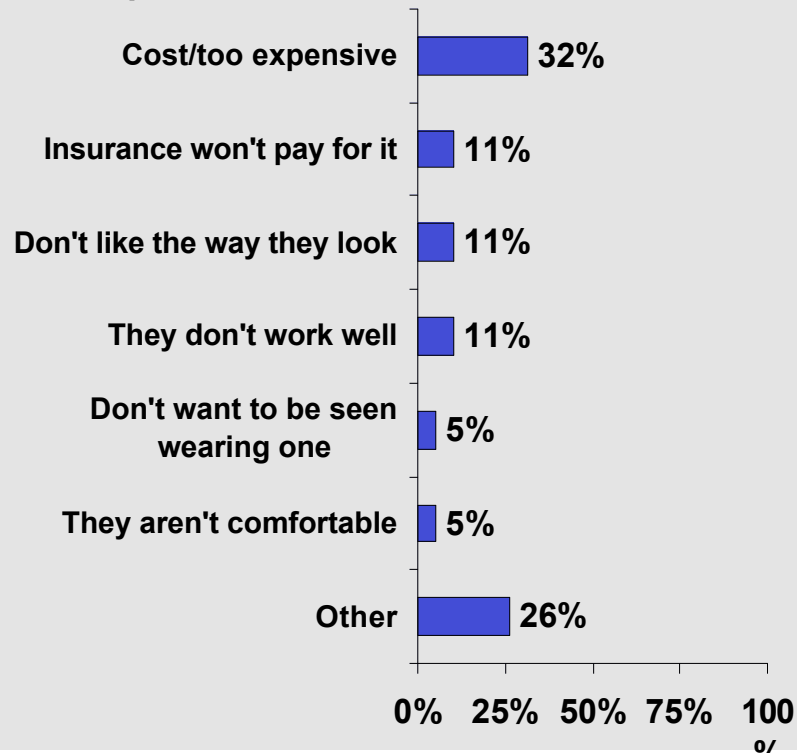


# Wear a Hearing Aid



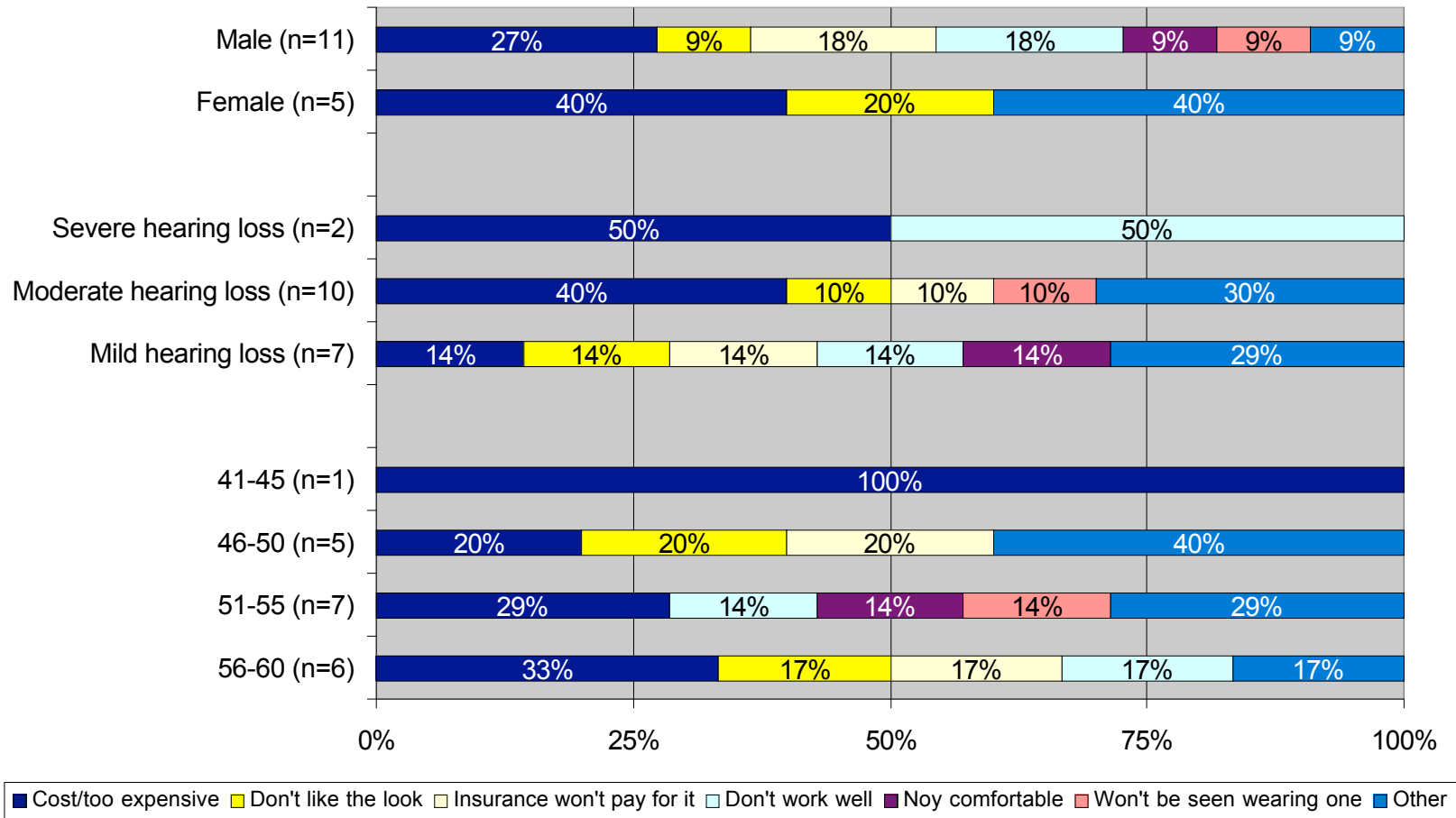
# Primary Reason for Not Wearing a Hearing Aid

✦ **Q: (IF NO) What would you say is the primary reason that you do not wear a hearing aid? (CHECK ONE ONLY)**



- ✦ One-third (32%) of those that have been told they should wear a hearing aid but choose not to said it is because of cost.
- ✦ Other frequently mentioned responses included “insurance won’t pay for it” (11%), “don’t like the way they look” (11%) and “they don’t work well” (11%).

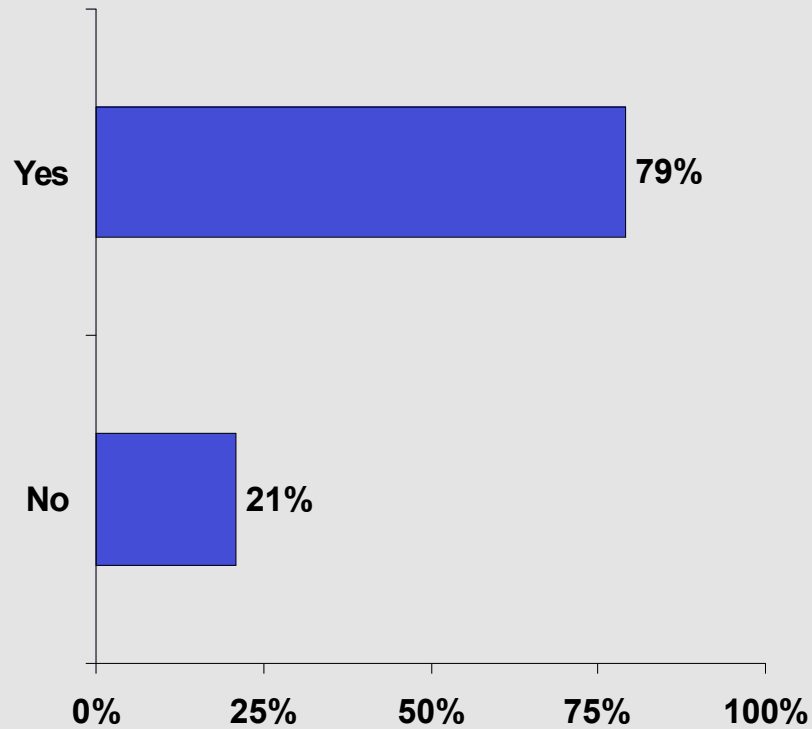
# Primary Reason for Not Wearing a Hearing Aid



# Have a Cell Phone

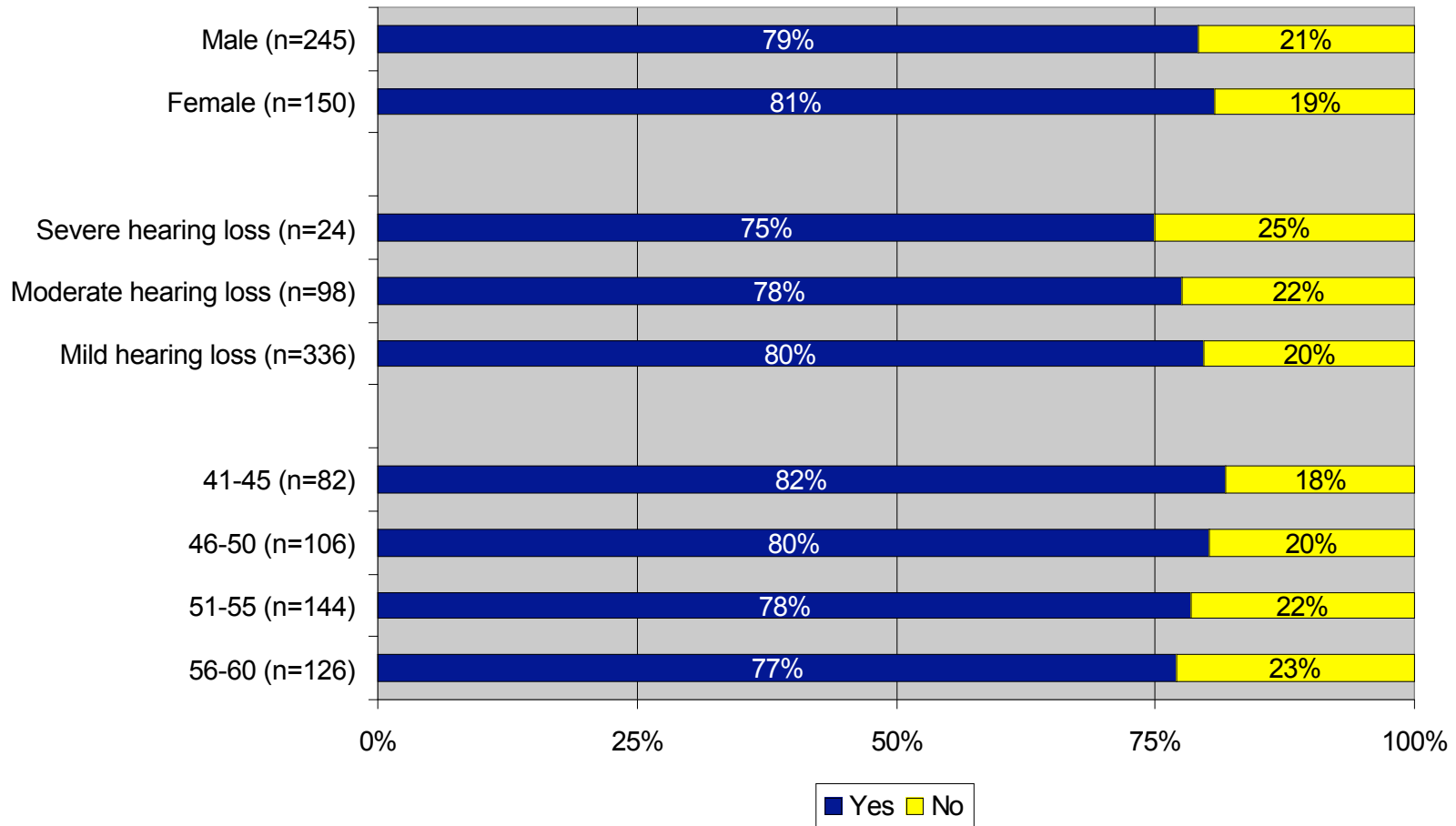
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✦ *Q: Do you have a cell phone?*



✦ Most respondents (79%) said they do have a cell phone.

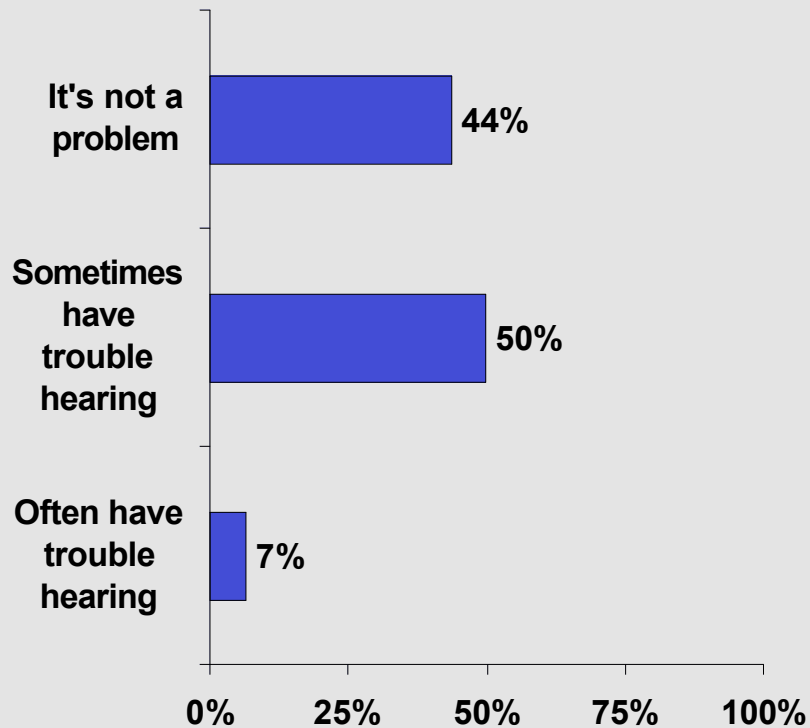
# Have a Cell Phone



# Hearing on Cell Phone

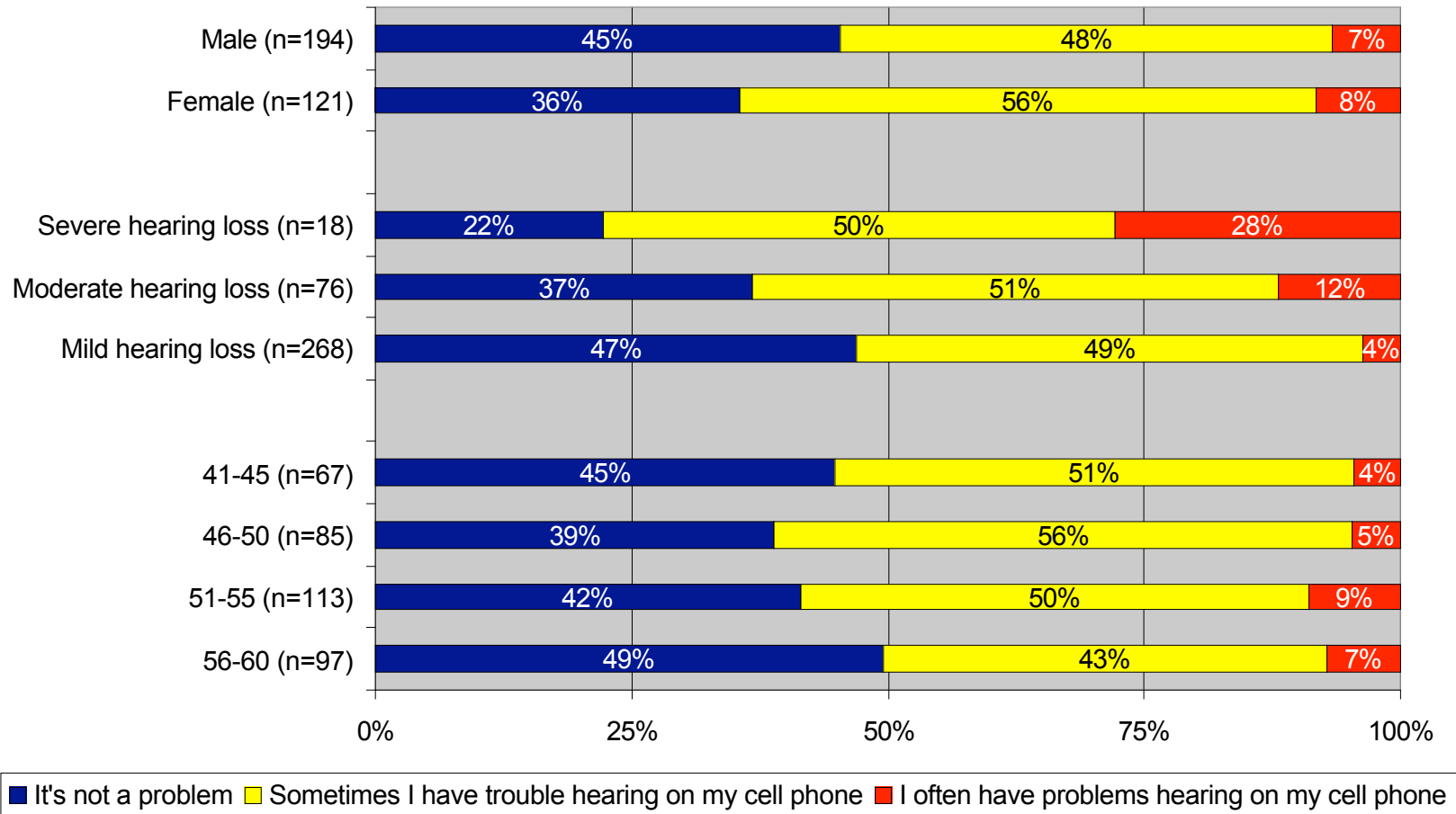
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✦ **Q: (IF YES) Which of the following best describes how well you can hear on your cell phone?**



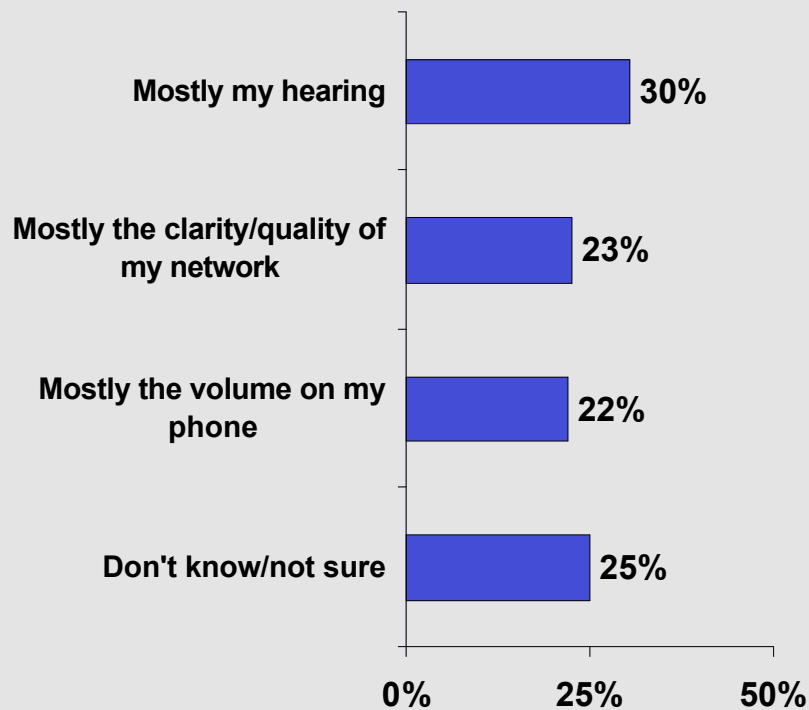
✦ Among respondents with a cell phone, 57% said they sometimes (50%) or often (7%) have trouble hearing on their cell phone.

# Hearing on Cell Phone



# Nature of Cell Phone Hearing Problems

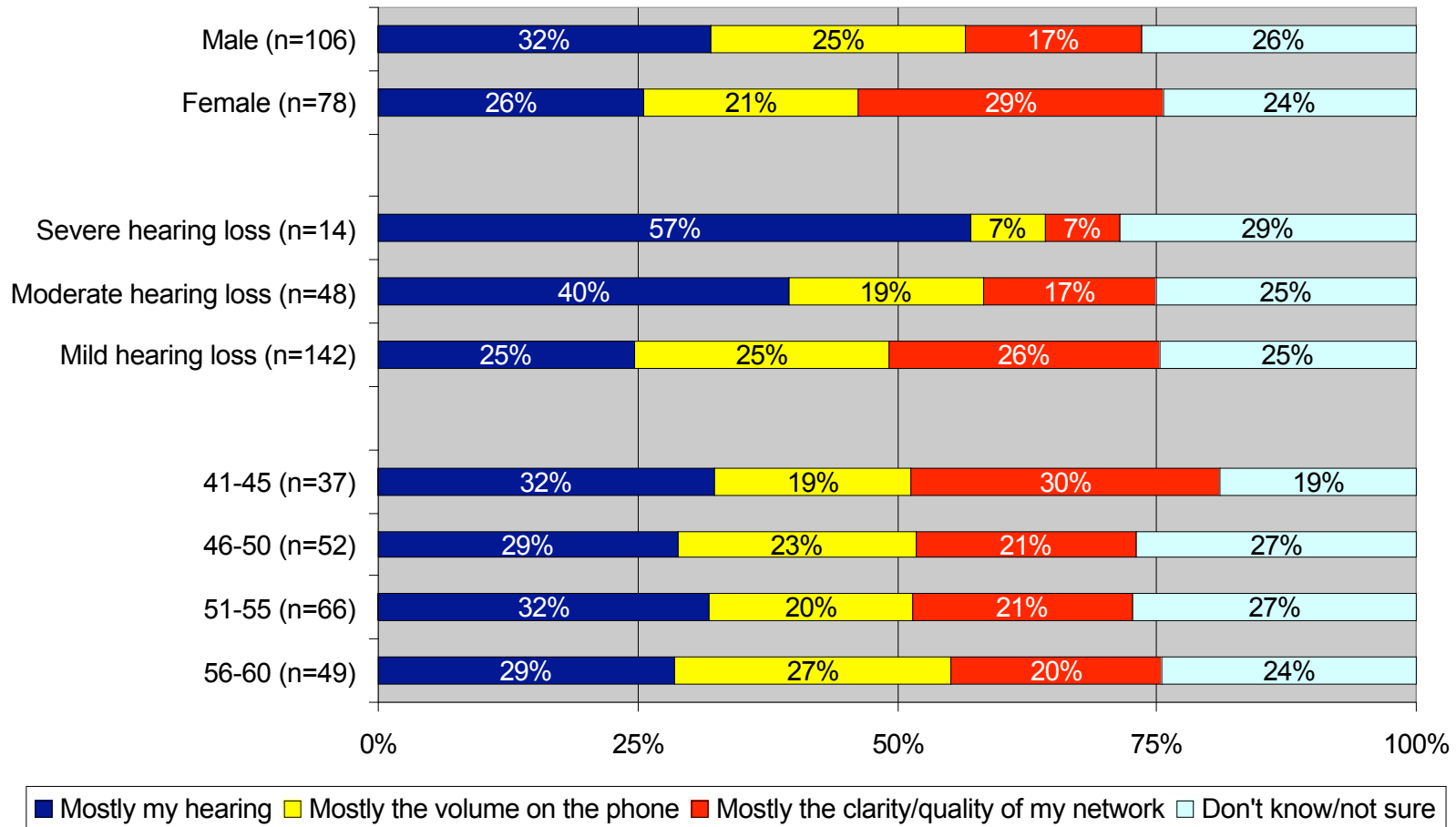
✦ **Q: (IF PROBLEMS SOMETIMES/OFTEN) Do you think that the problems you are having hearing on your cell phone are:**



✦ Those who have problems hearing on their cell phone tend to spread the blame around – 30% said the problem is their hearing, 23% said it's their network, 22% said it's the volume on the phone, and 25% don't know.

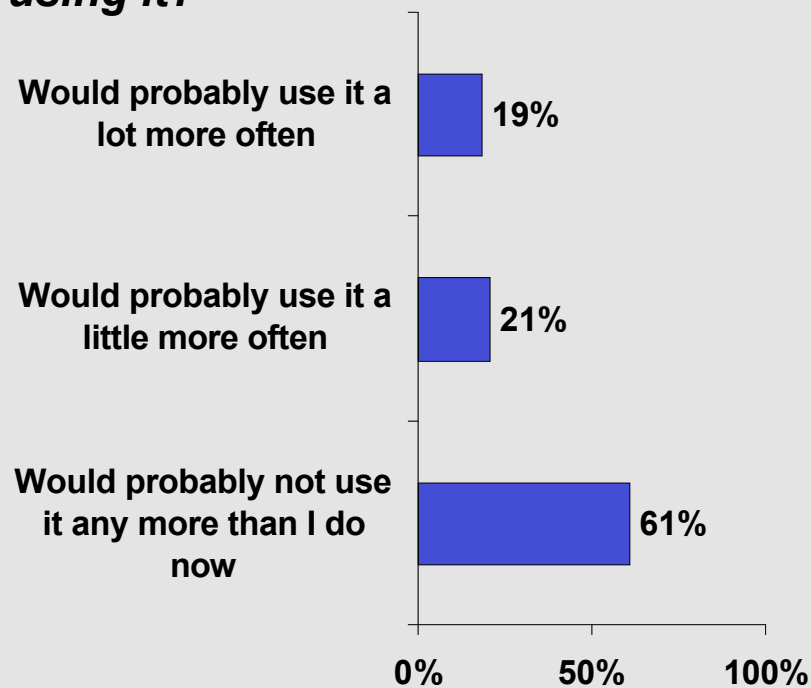


# Nature of Cell Phone Hearing Problems



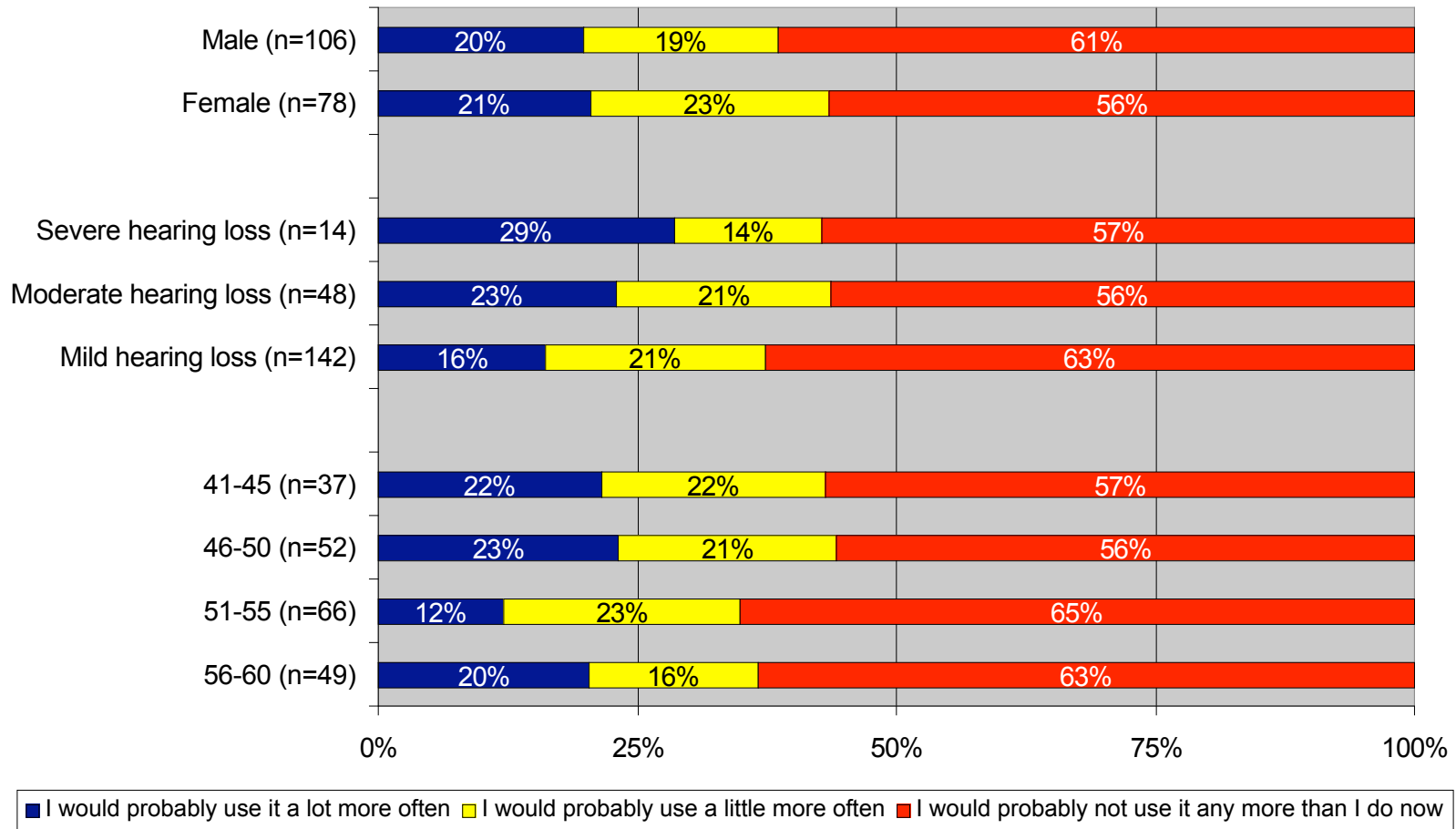
# Use Cell Phone More/Less Often

✦ **Q: (IF PROBLEMS SOMETIMES/OFTEN) Would you use your cell phone more often if you could hear conversations more clearly when using it?**



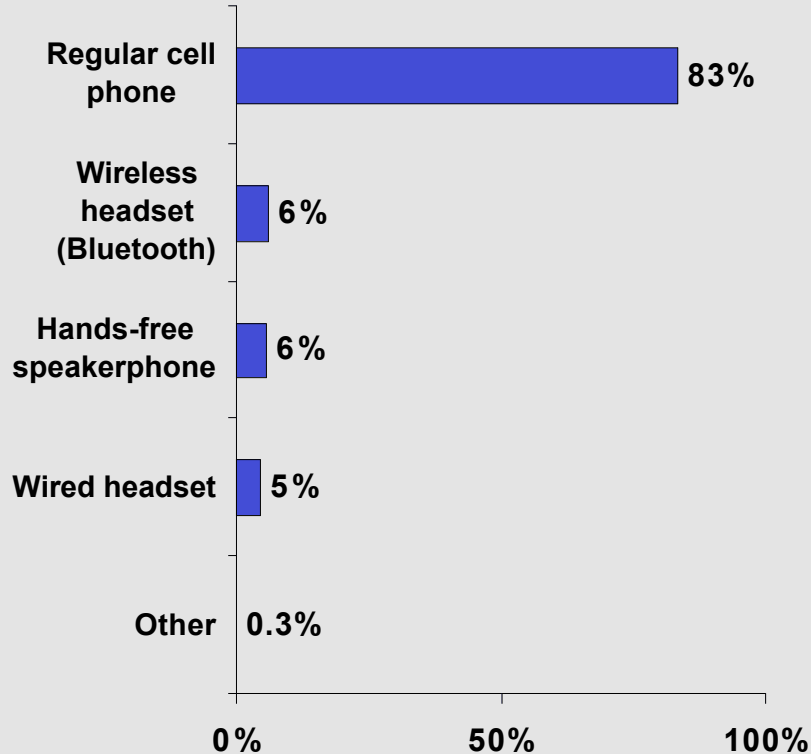
✦ Forty percent (40%) of those that have problems hearing on their cell phone said they would probably use their cell phone a little more often (21%) or a lot more often (19%) if they could hear conversations more clearly when using it.

# Use Cell Phone More/Less Often



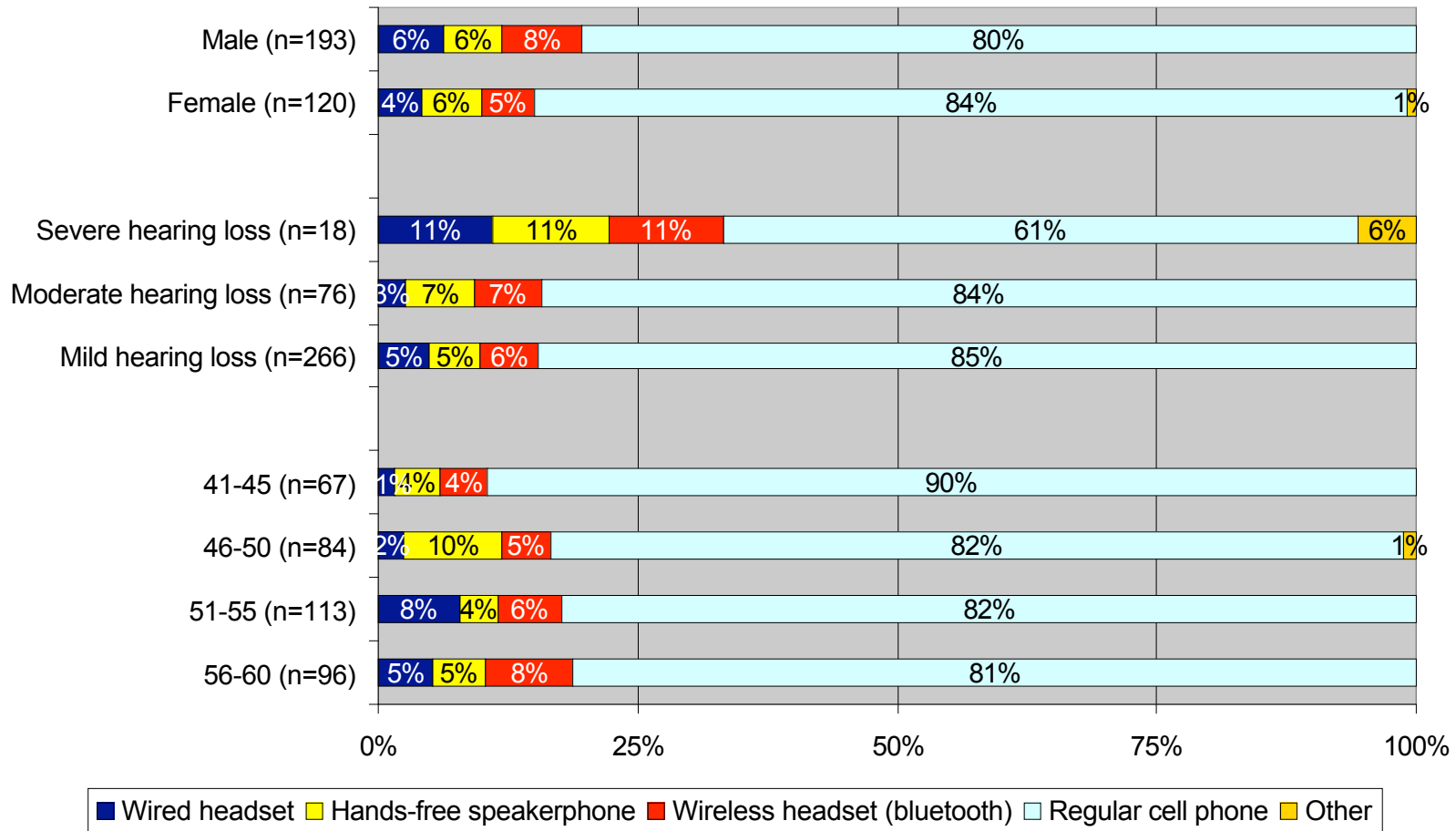
# Type of Cell Phone Used

✦ **Q: (IF HAVE A CELL PHONE) With regards to your cell phone, do you tend to use:**



- ✦ A great majority (83%) of those that have a cell phone use just a regular cell phone.
- ✦ Other types of devices used included a wireless Bluetooth headset (used by 6%), hands-free speakerphone (6%) and a wired headset (5%).

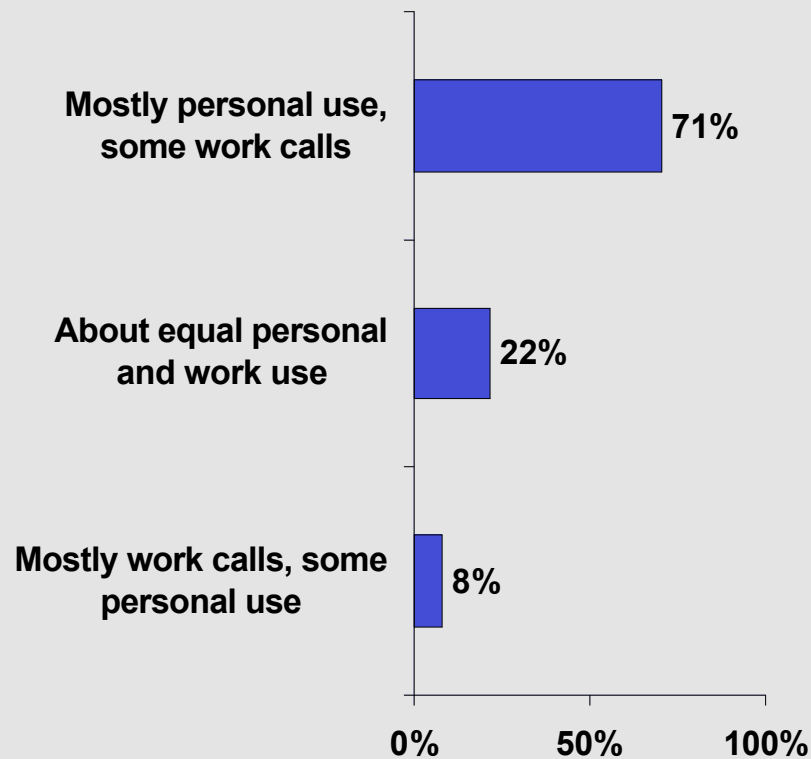
# Type of Cell Phone Used



# Use of Cell Phone

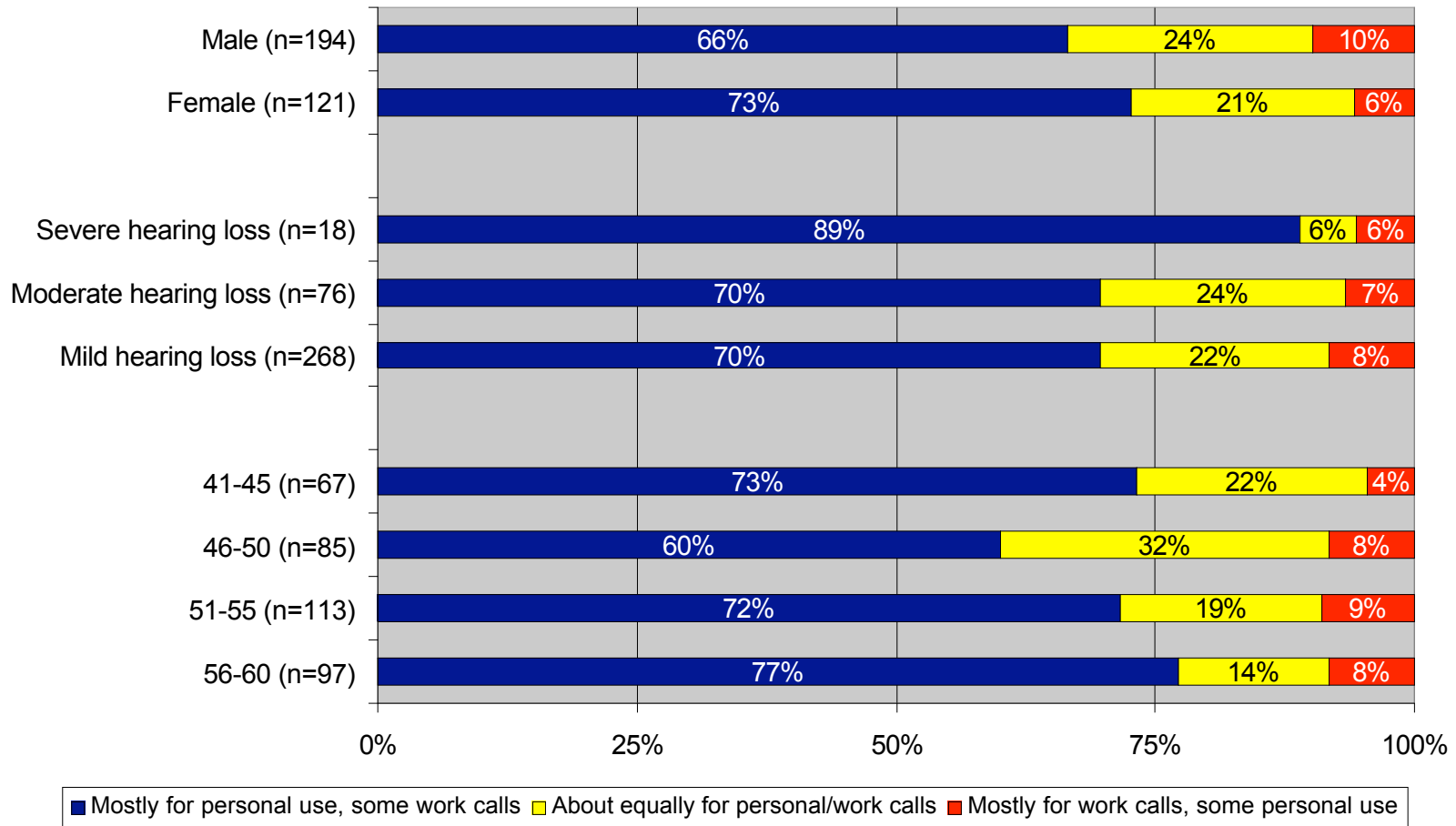
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✦ **Q: Which of the following best describes your usage of your cell phone?**



- ✦ More than two-thirds (71%) said their cell phone is used mostly for personal calls, while another 22% said it was used equally for personal and work calls.
- ✦ Just 8% said they used their phones primarily for work.

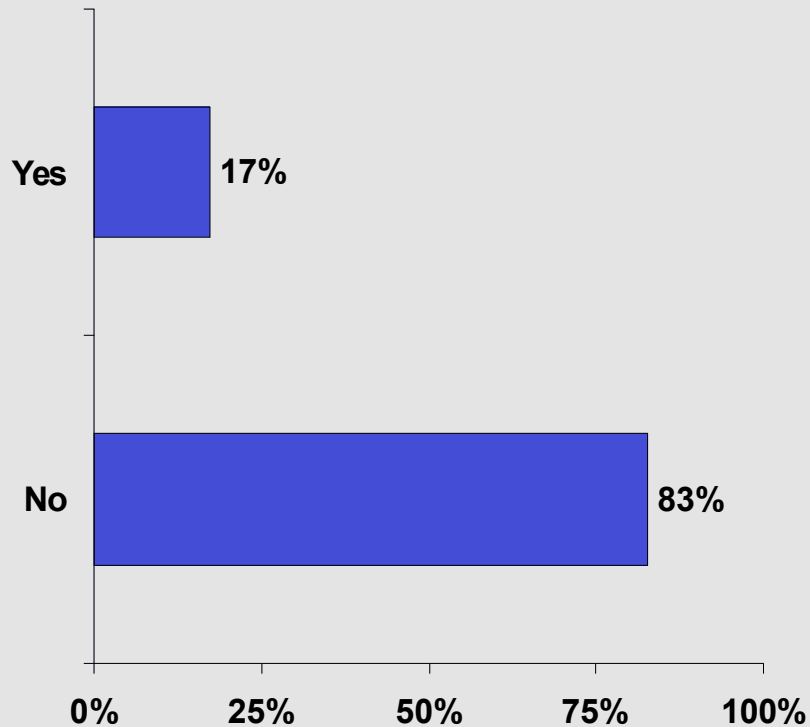
# Use of Cell Phone



# Awareness of Cell Phone Hearing Devices

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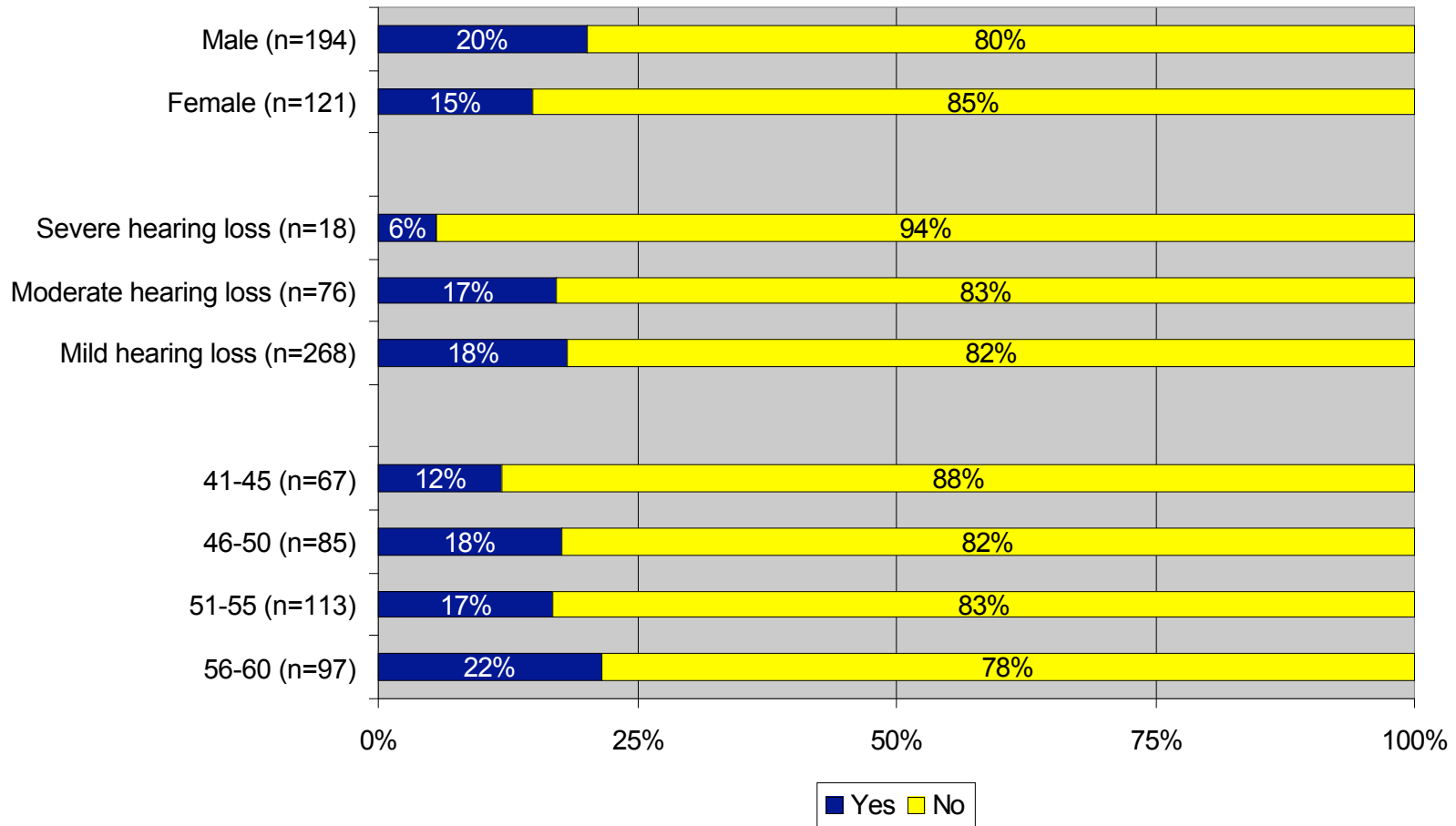
✦ **Q: Are you aware of any devices that can help you hear better on your cell phone?**



✦ Overall, 17% said they are aware of devices that can help you hear better on your cell phone.

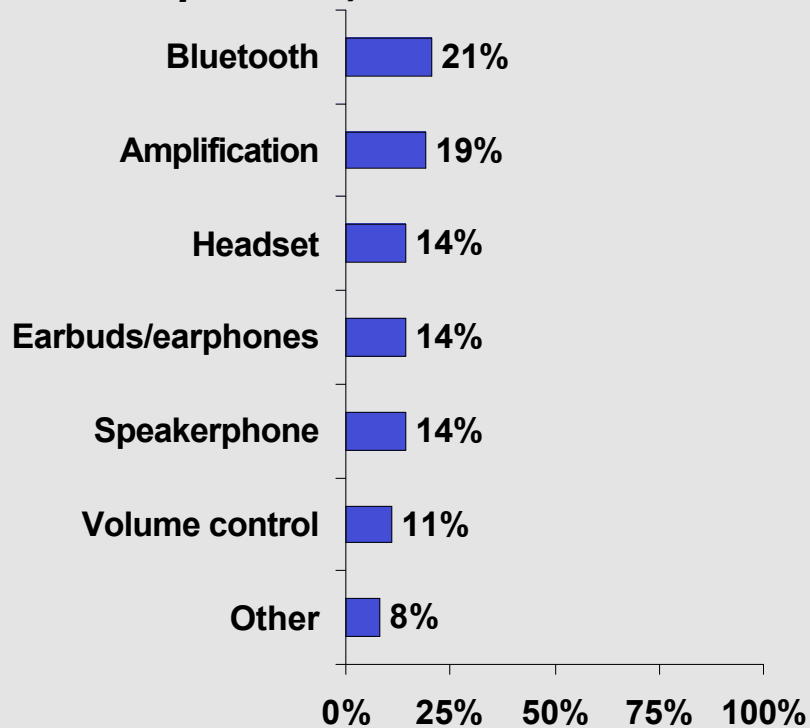


# Awareness of Cell Phone Hearing Devices



# Awareness of Specific Cell Phone Devices

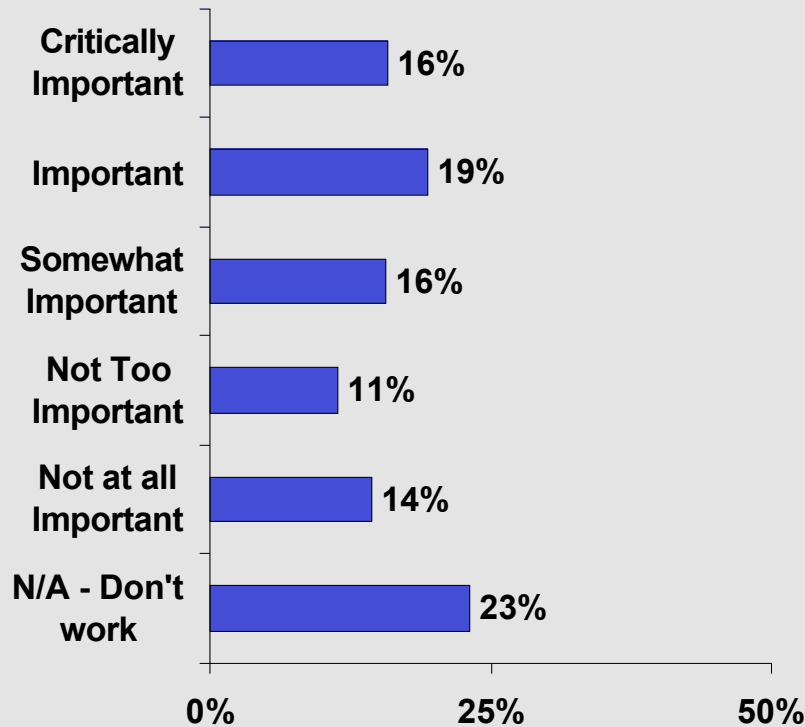
✦ **Q: What specific devices are you aware of that can help you hear better on your cell phone? (Do not read responses.)**



✦ The devices or technologies that were mentioned most often were Bluetooth (21%) and amplification (19%).

# Importance of Phone at Work

✦ *Q: How important is the use of the telephone in your job?*

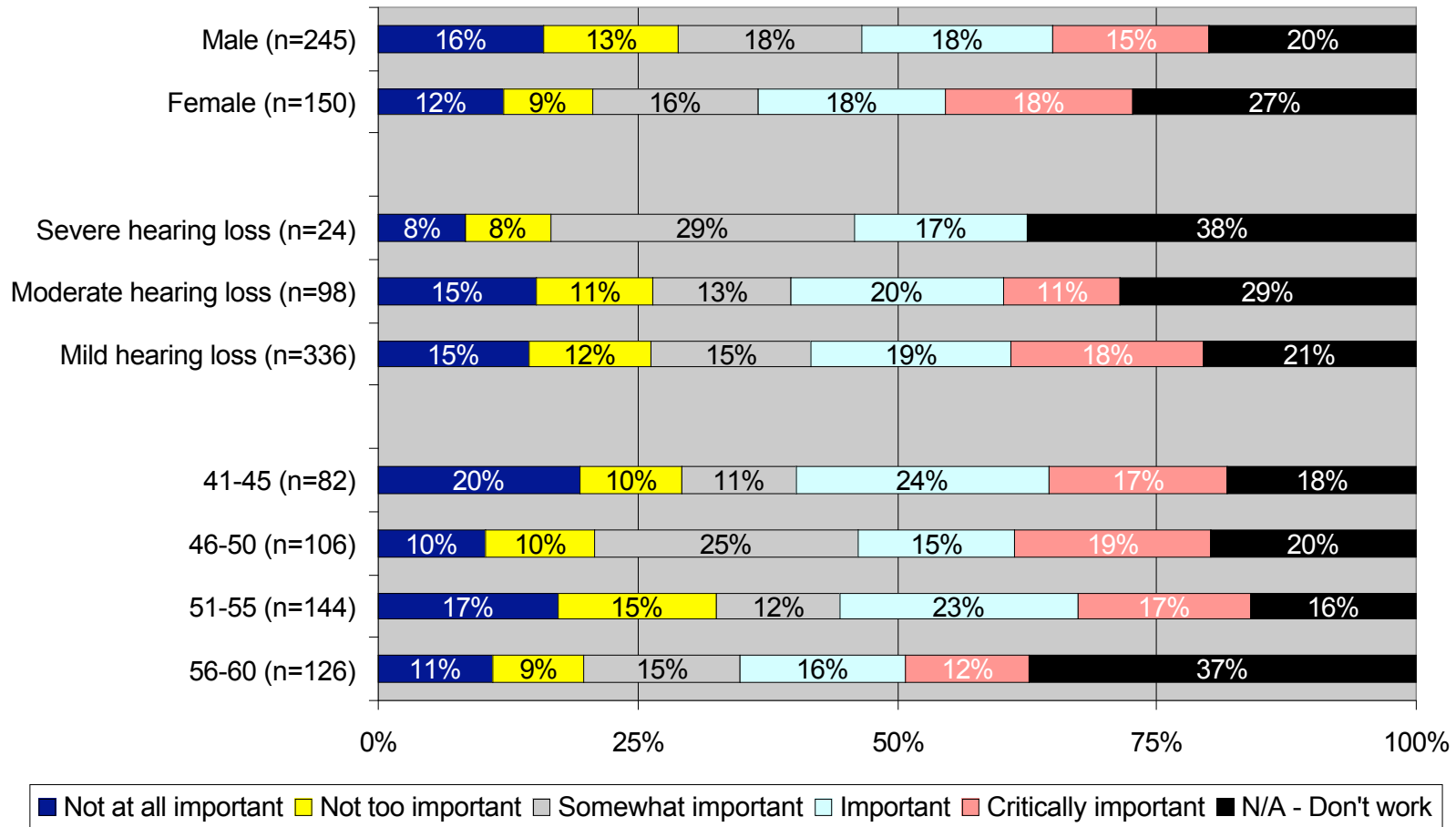


✦ The use of a telephone was Important (19%) or Critically Important (16%) to 35% of all respondents.

✦ Conversely, 25% said it was Not too Important (11%) or Not at all Important (14%).

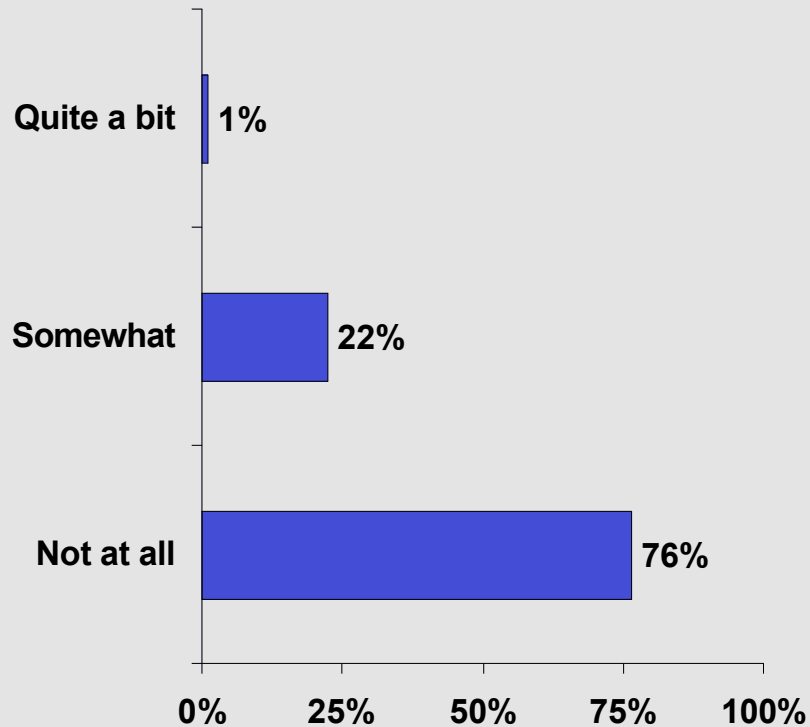
✦ Note that 23% of respondents said this question was not applicable because they do not work.

# Importance of Phone at Work



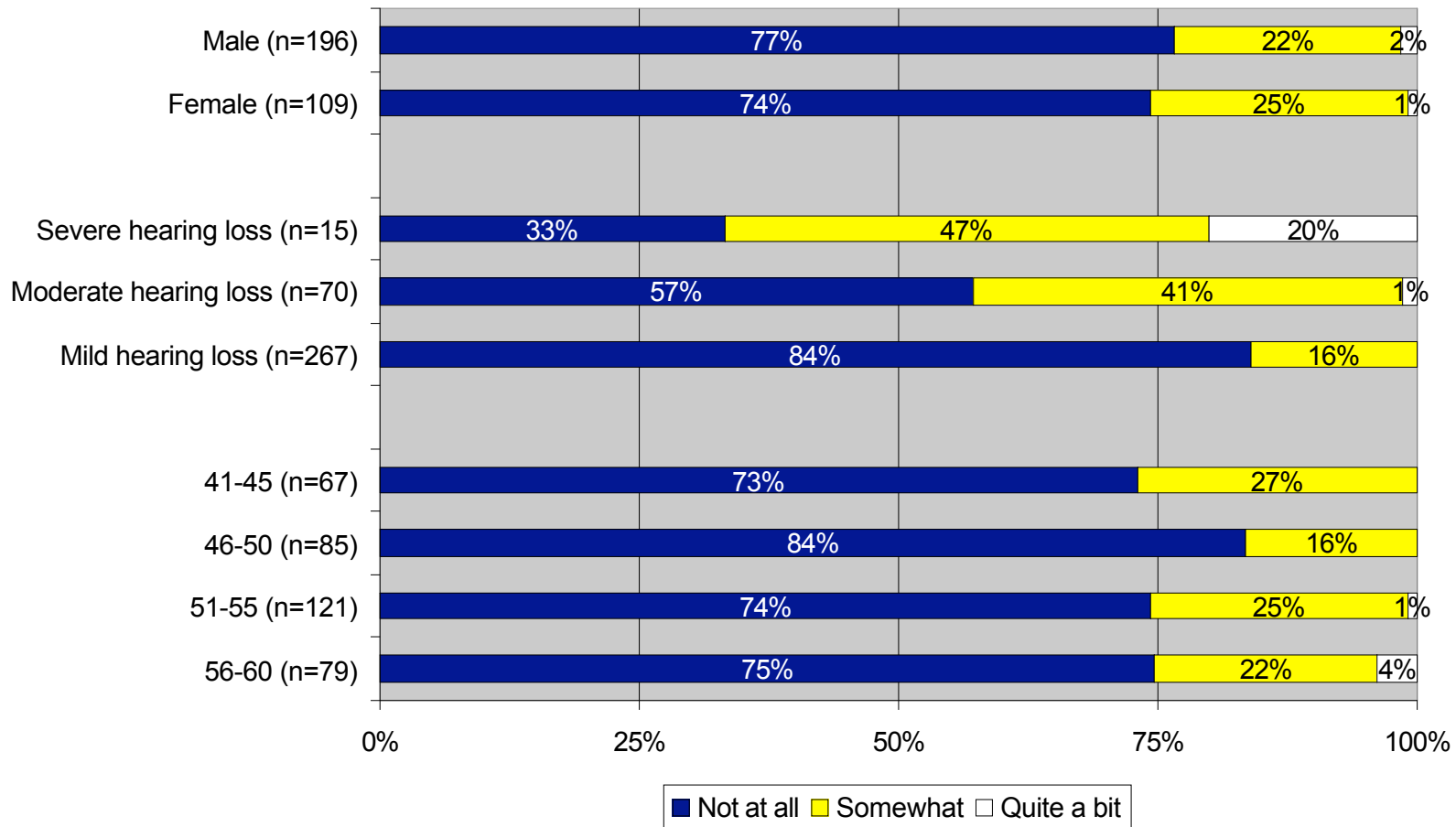
# Hearing Loss Affecting Work

✦ **Q: (IF WORKING) To what degree is your hearing loss affecting your work?**



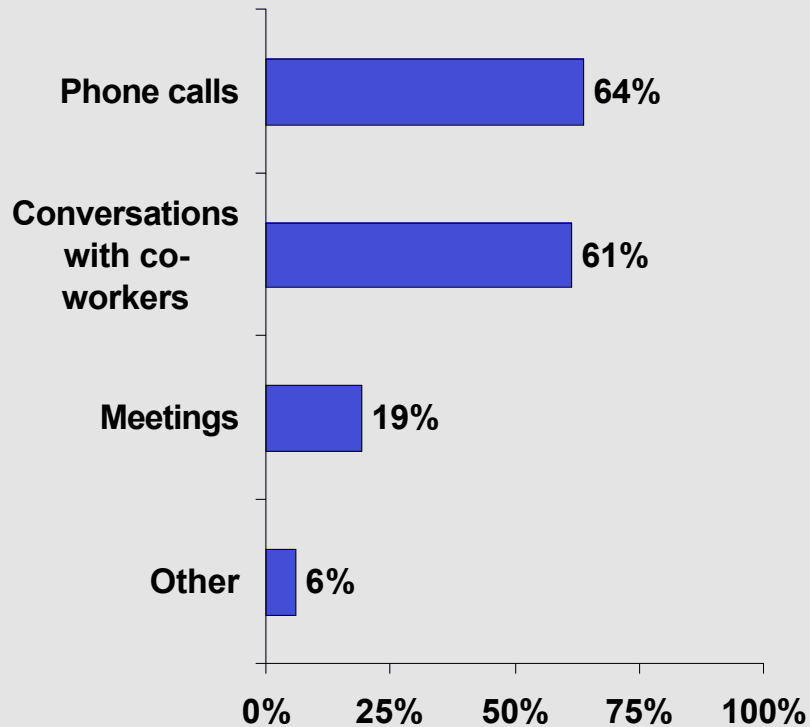
- ✦ Three-fourths (76%) said that their hearing loss affects their work “not at all,” while 22% said it affects it “somewhat.”
- ✦ Just 1% said their hearing loss affects their work “quite a bit.”

# Hearing Loss Affecting Work



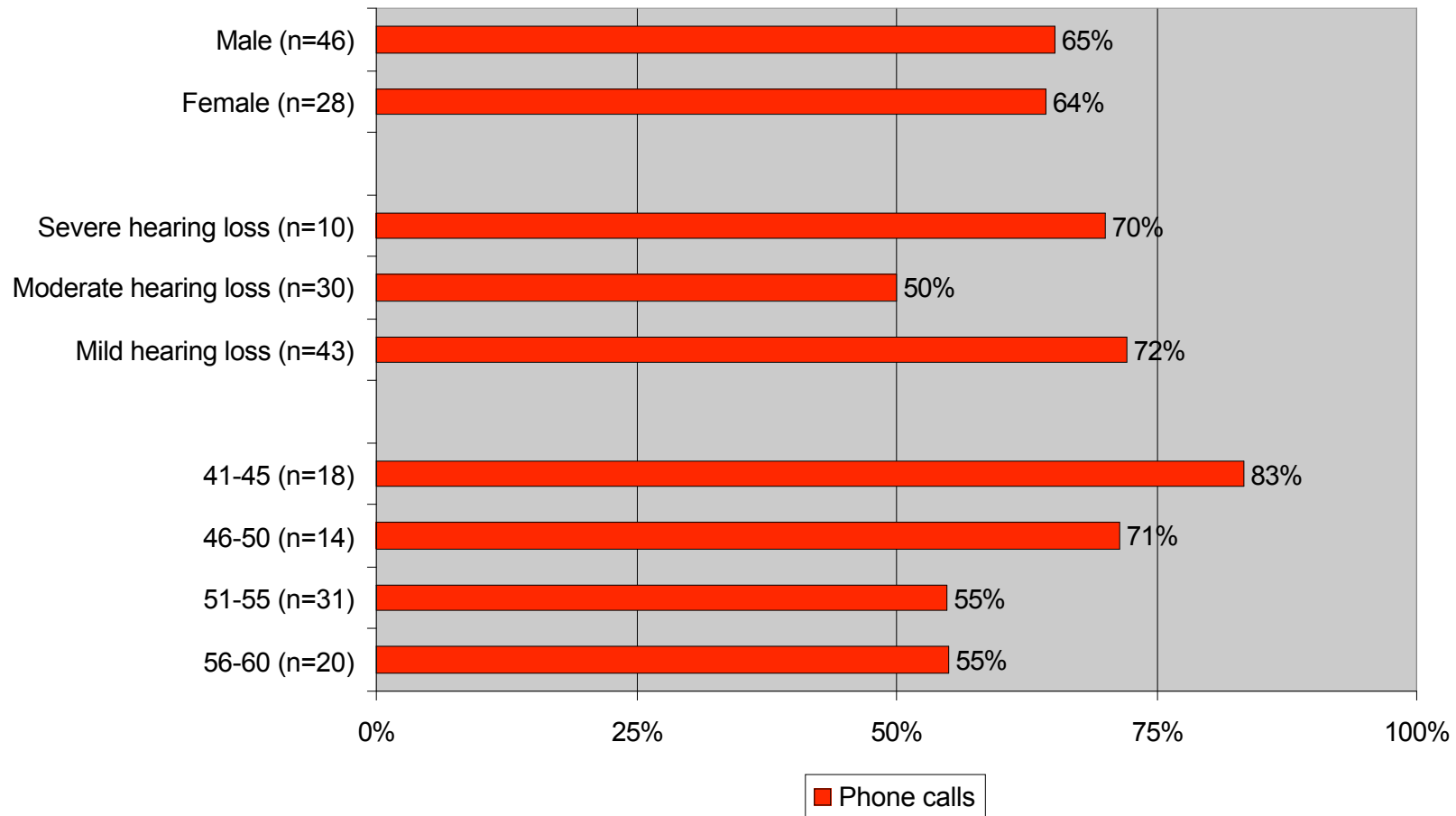
# Work Areas Affected by Hearing Loss

✦ **Q: (IF SOMEWHAT/QUITE A BIT)**  
**What areas of your work are impacted because of your hearing loss?**



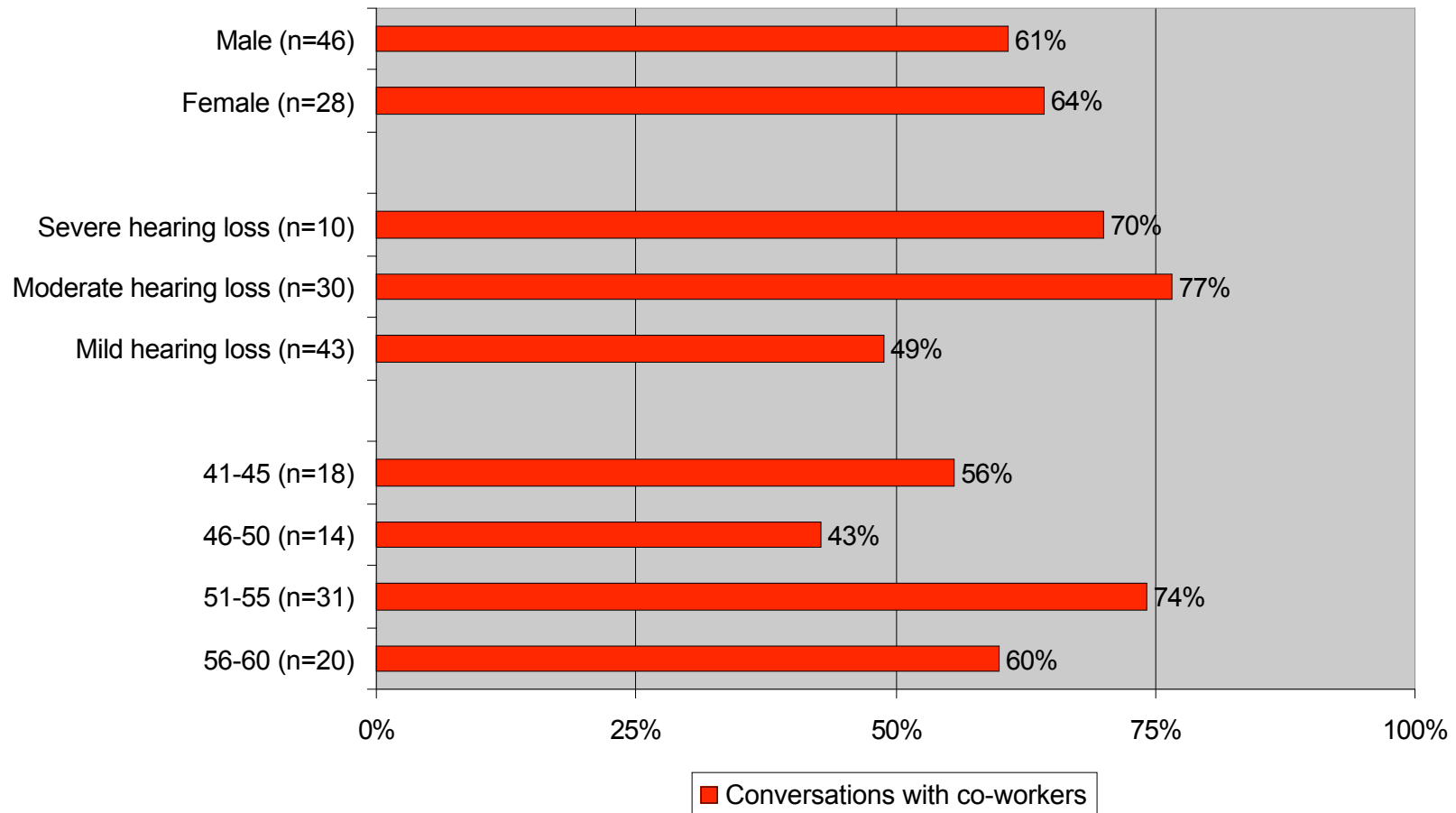
✦ Among those that said their hearing loss affects their work somewhat or quite a bit, phone calls (64%) and conversations with co-workers (61%) are the areas most impacted by this.

# Work Areas Affected by Hearing Loss: Phone Calls

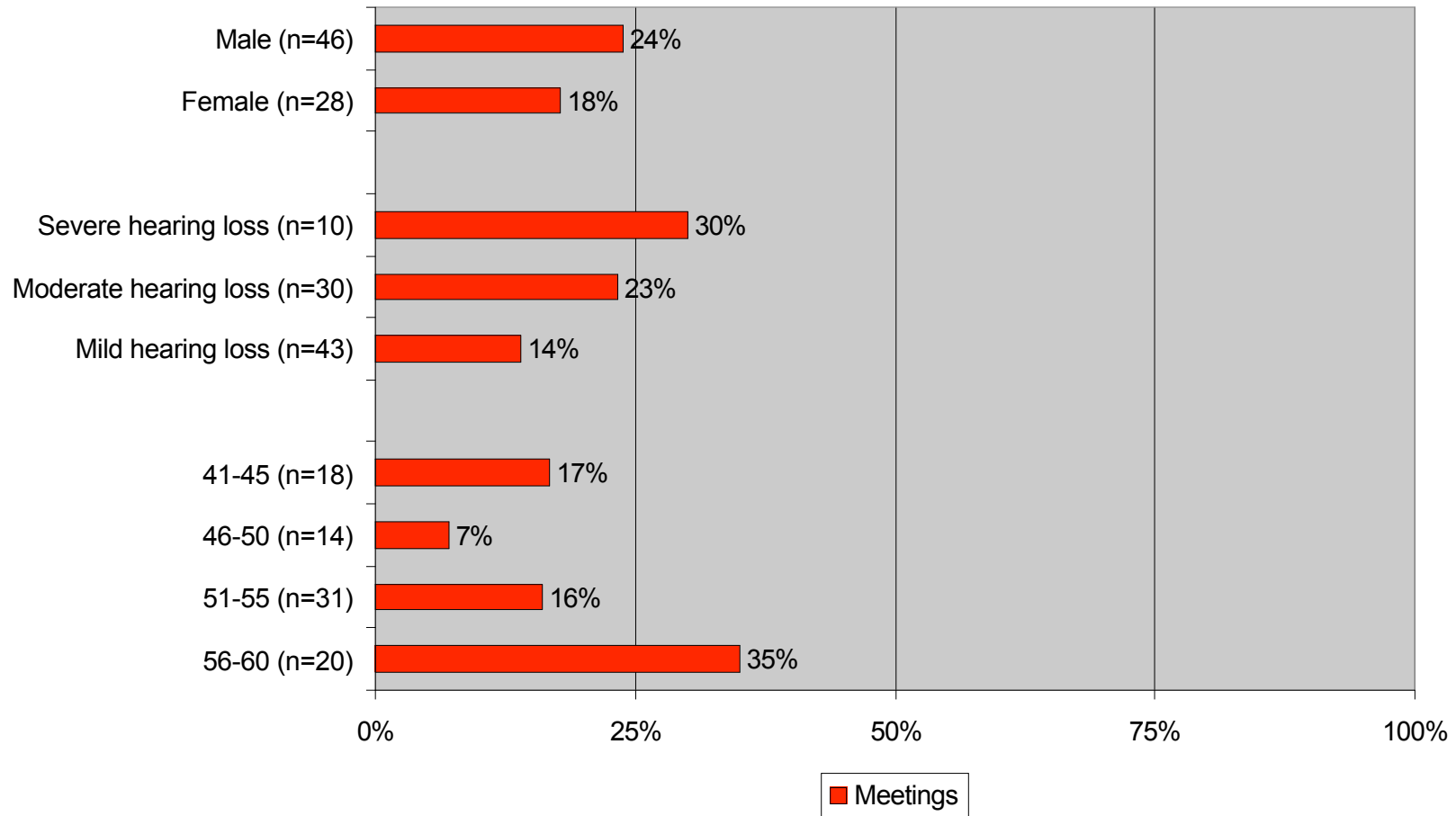




# Work Areas Affected by Hearing Loss: Conversations

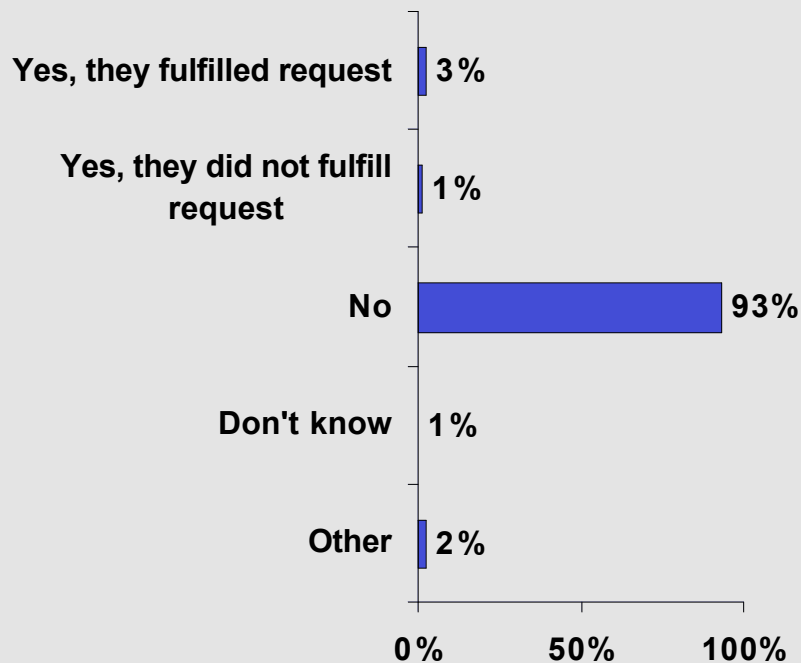


# Work Areas Affected by Hearing Loss: Meetings



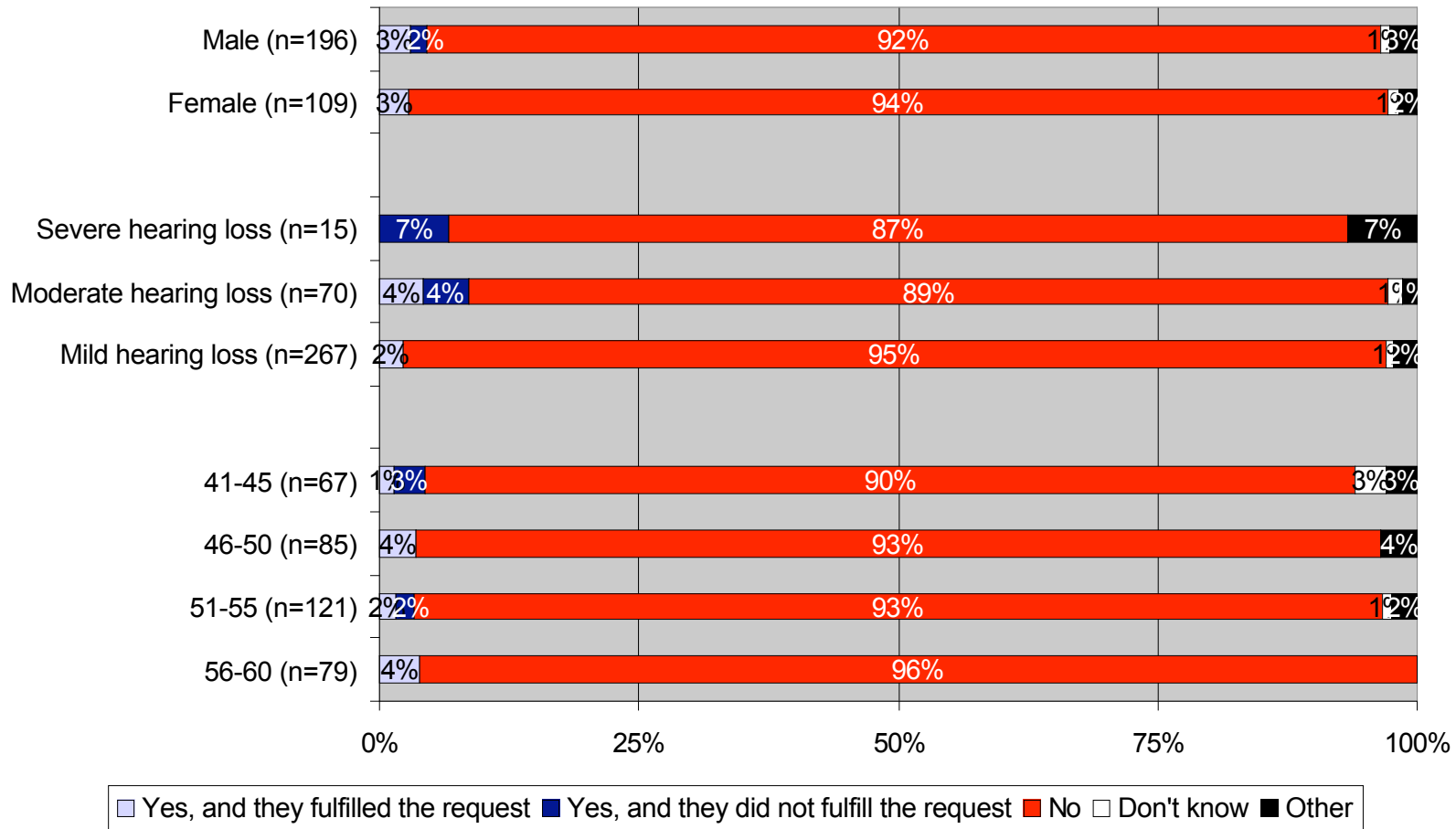
# Asked Employer for Help

✦ **Q: (IF WORKING) Have you ever requested that your employer do something to help you address your hearing loss in the workplace?**



✦ Just 4% of all respondents said they had requested that their employer do something to help them address their hearing loss in the workplace.

# Asked Employer for Help



# How Employer Fulfilled Your Request

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- ✦ A total of nine respondents answered this question, and they were split into three groups:
  - ✦ Four (4) were provided things that would help them hear better through amplification devices (e.g. phone amplifiers)
  - ✦ Another four (4) were provided with things that would help them by reducing the amount of noise they were exposed to (e.g. hearing protection devices)
  - ✦ The remaining one (1) was provided with medical assistance for their hearing loss – their employer sent them to a specialist

# Reasons Employer Did Not Fulfill Request

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- ✦ There were just three responses to this question:
  - ✦ “They said ‘There’s nothing wrong with your hearing. Clean your ears out.’ ”
  - ✦ “Too much money.”
  - ✦ “Because I was not really doing a job where talking on the phone was required, and in meetings I made sure to sit where I could hear and I also took notes.”

# Reasons for Not Asking Employer for Help

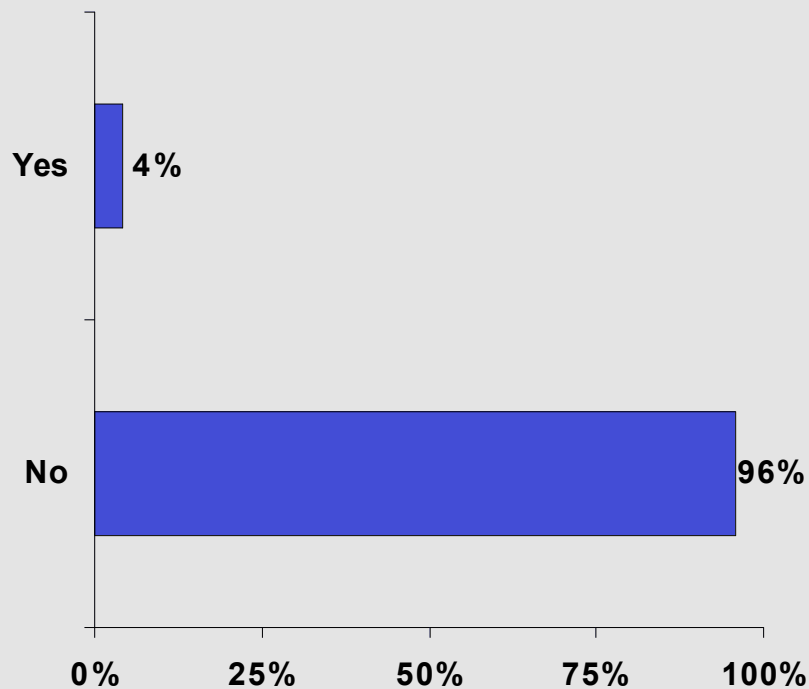
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- ✦ Most of those that are not asking for help indicated that it was because their hearing loss is not that bad and/or it does not affect their work (55%) or because they don't use the phone at their job (4%). Other reasons included:
  - ✦ About 15% said it really didn't apply to them, mostly because they were self-employed, not currently working, or only working part time.
  - ✦ About 5% said they didn't want their employer to know or they were too embarrassed to inform them.
  - ✦ Interestingly, 3% said it was not their employer's problem to solve

# Wear an ALD at Work

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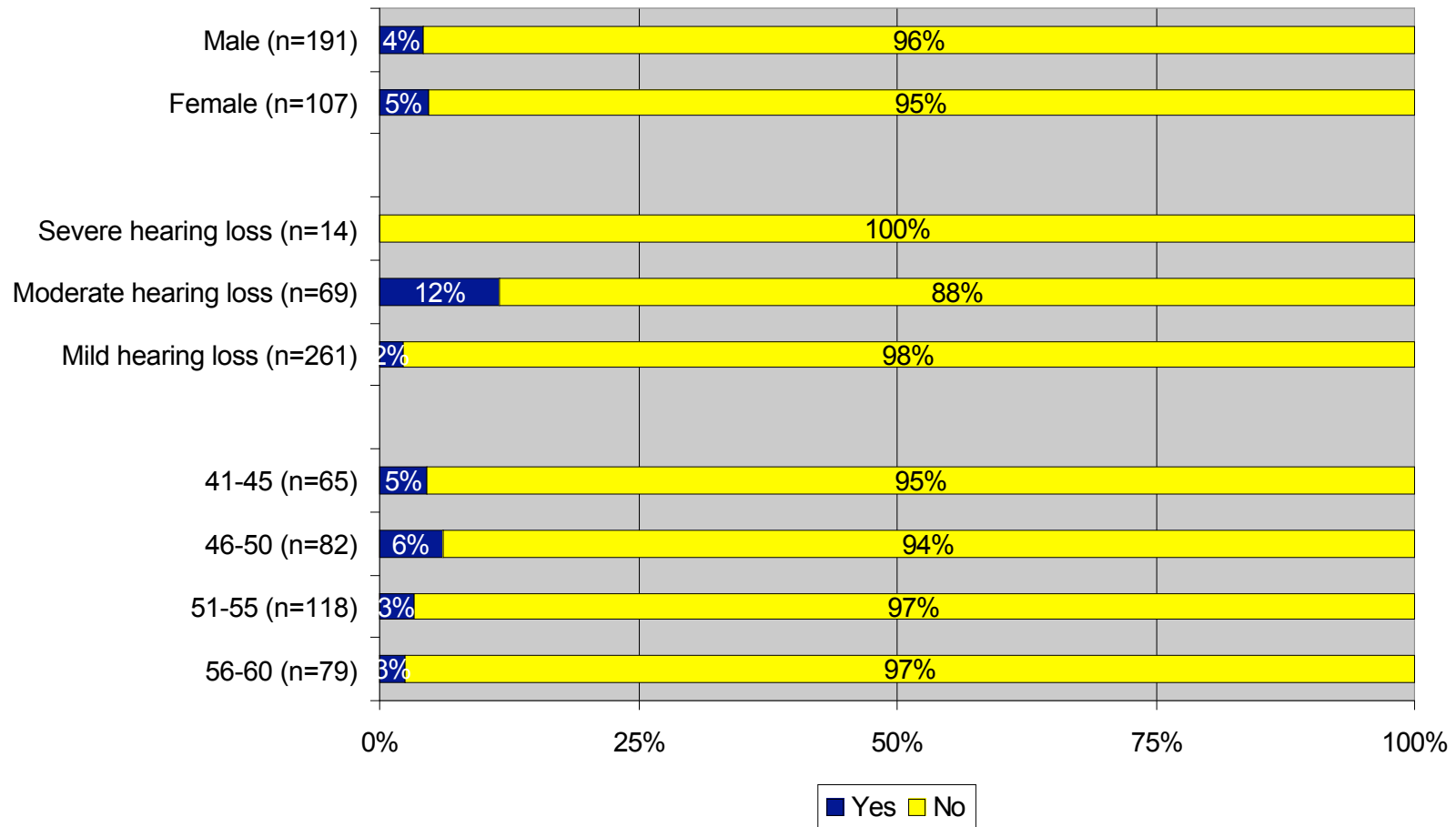
✦ **Q: (IF WORKING) Do you use an assistive listening device such as a phone amplifier or a personal listening device at work?**



✦ Despite the fact that all respondents said they had some level of hearing loss, just 4% are using an assistive listening device at work.

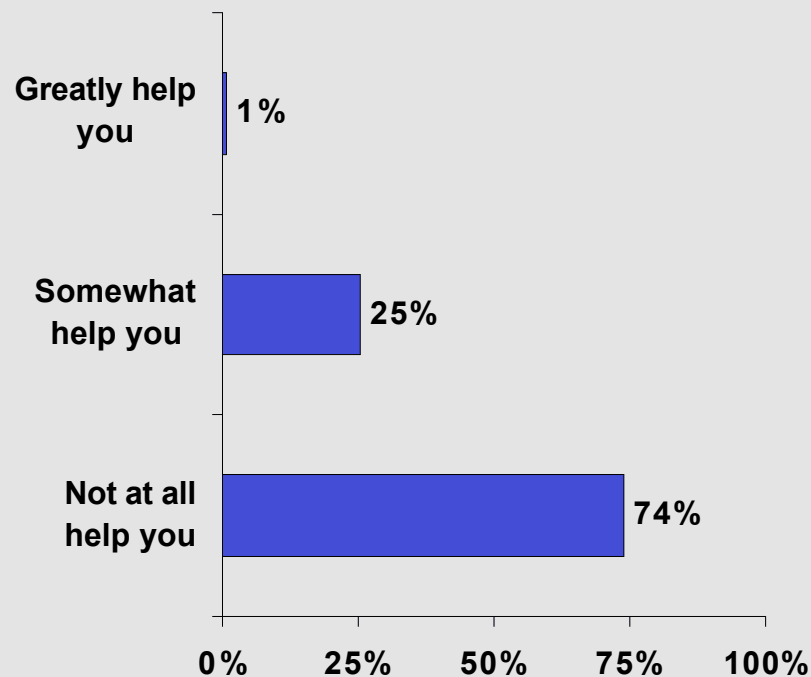


# Wear an ALD at Work



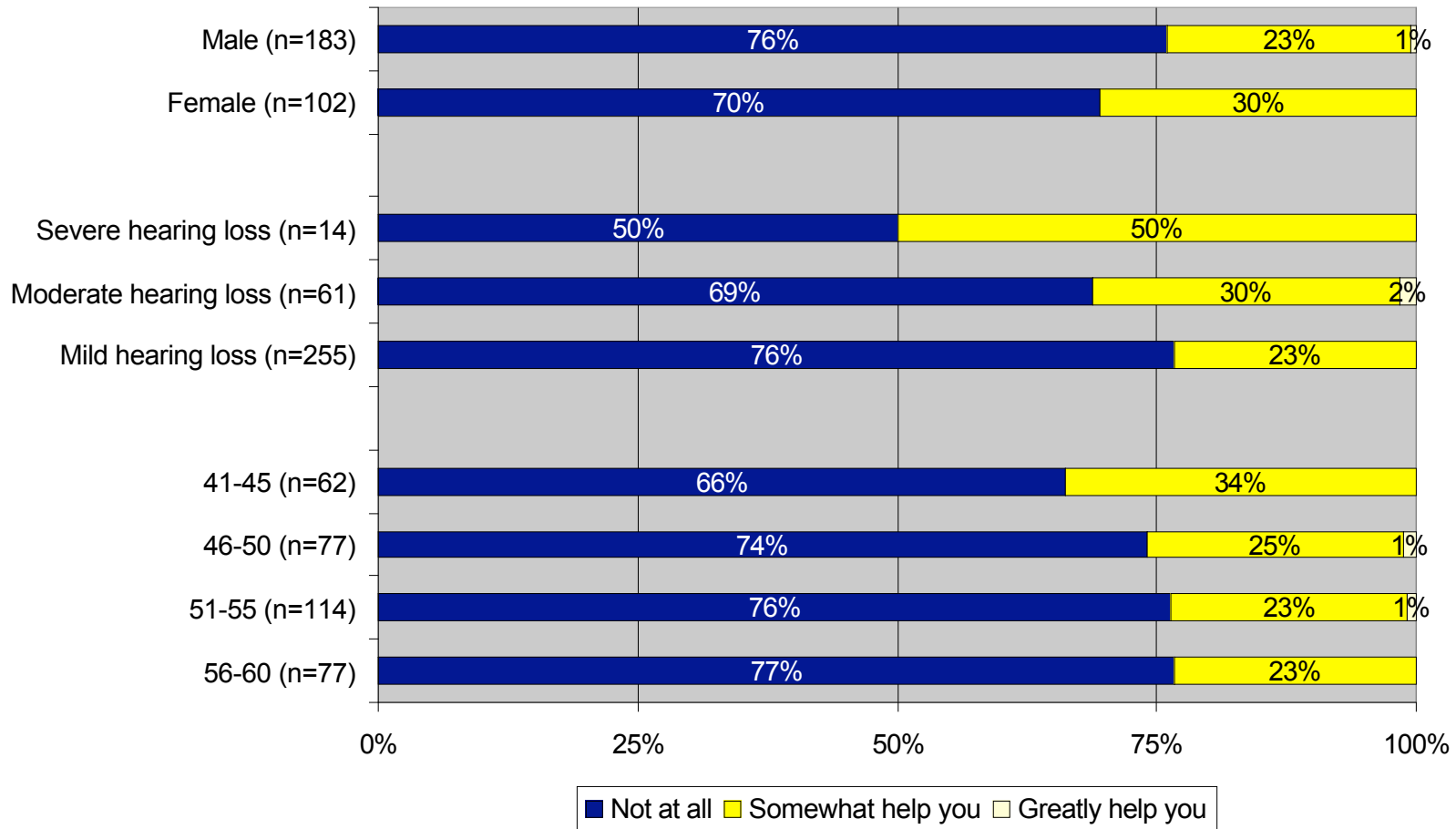
# Think an ALD at Work Would Help

✦ **Q: (IF WORKING) Do you think an ALD such as a phone amplifier or a personal listening device would help you perform better at your job?**



- ✦ One-fourth (25%) of respondents said that an assistive listening device would be somewhat helpful to them at their job; another 1% said it would be greatly helpful.
- ✦ Most (74%), though, said it would not be helpful at all to them.

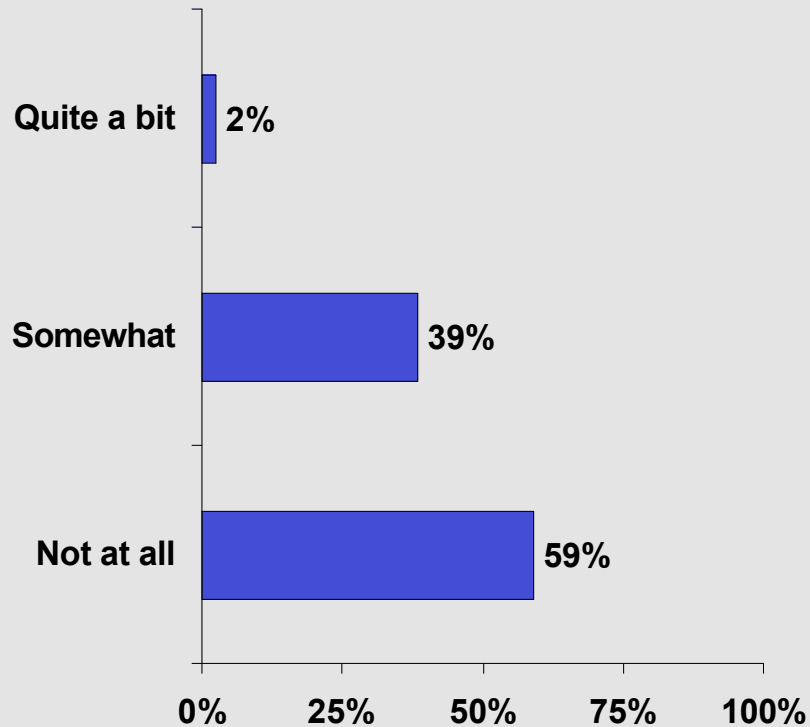
# Think an ALD at Work Would Help



# Affecting Home Life

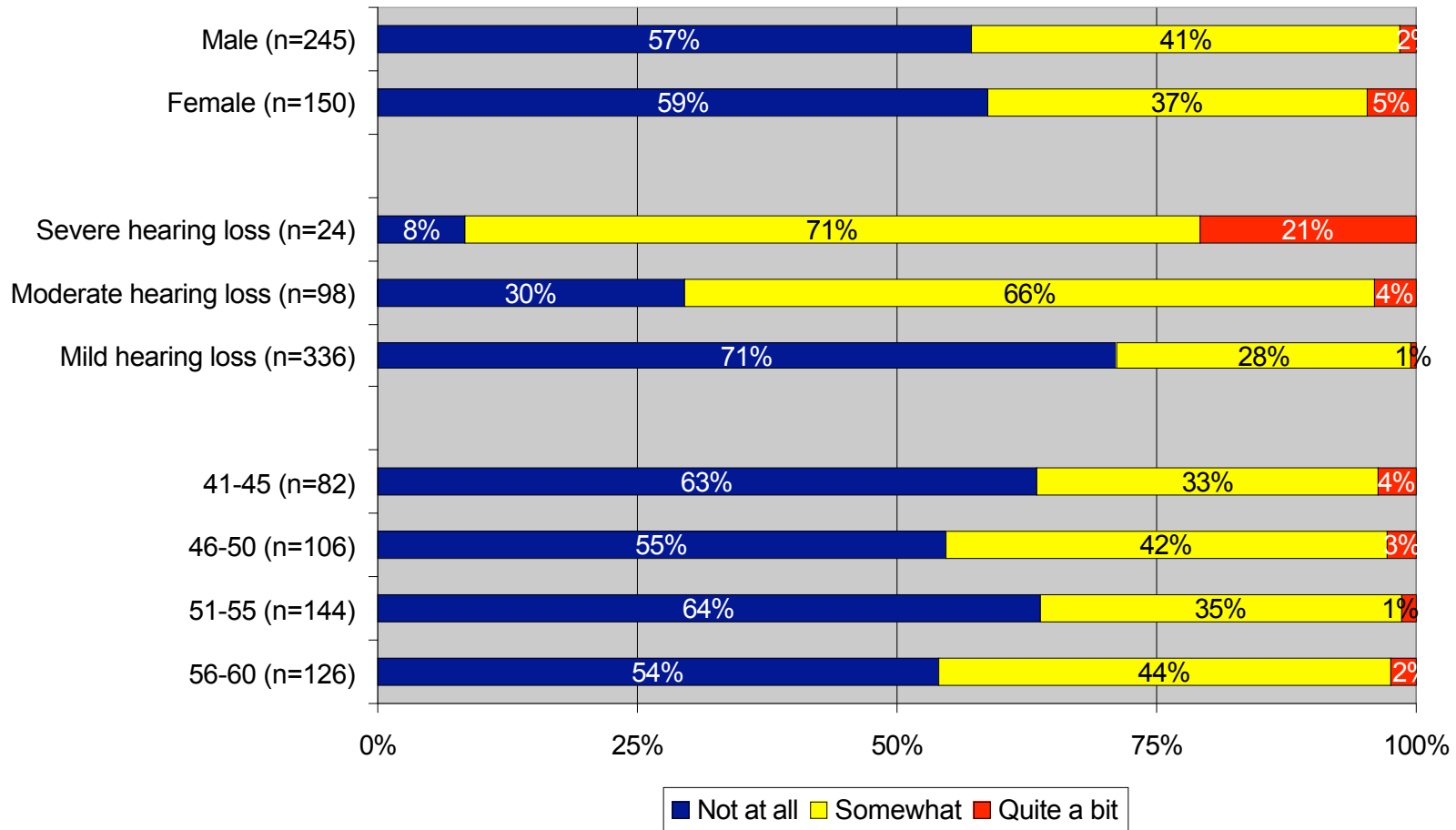
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✦ **Q: To what degree is your hearing loss affecting your home life?**



✦ Over 40% of all respondents said their hearing loss affects their home life is somewhat (39%) or quite a bit (2%).

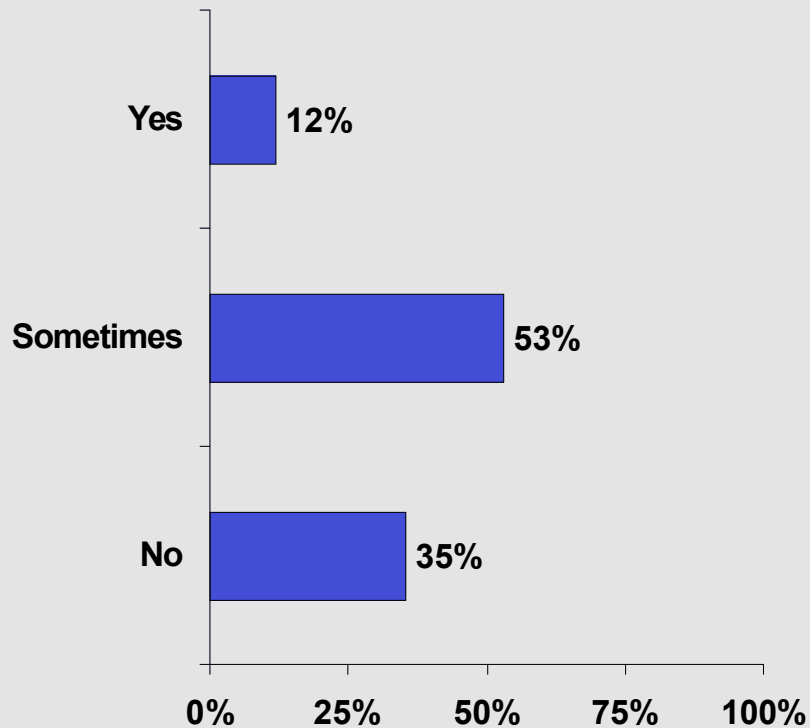
# Affecting Home Life



# Problems Hearing the Television

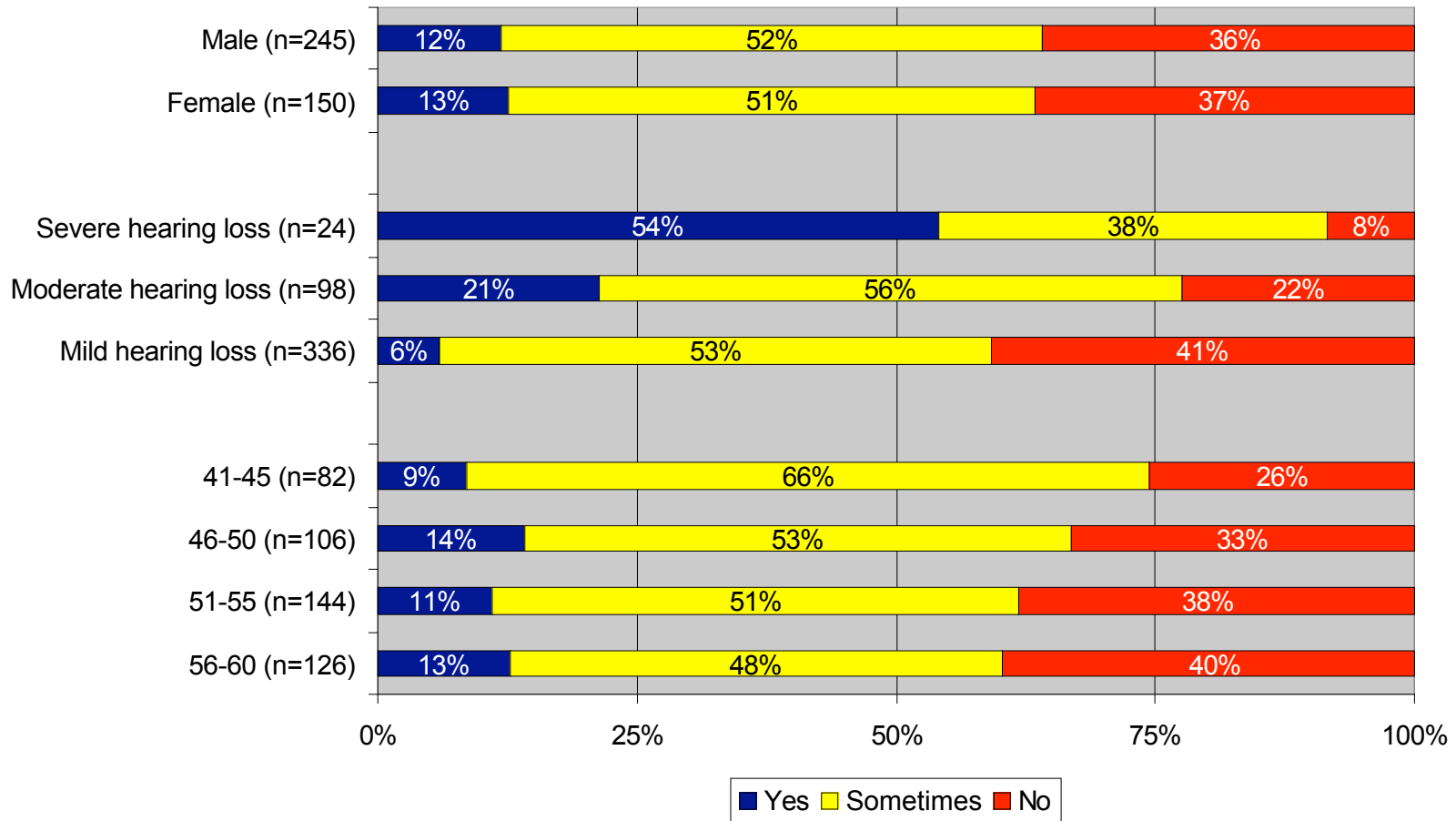
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✦ **Q: Do you have any trouble hearing the television?**



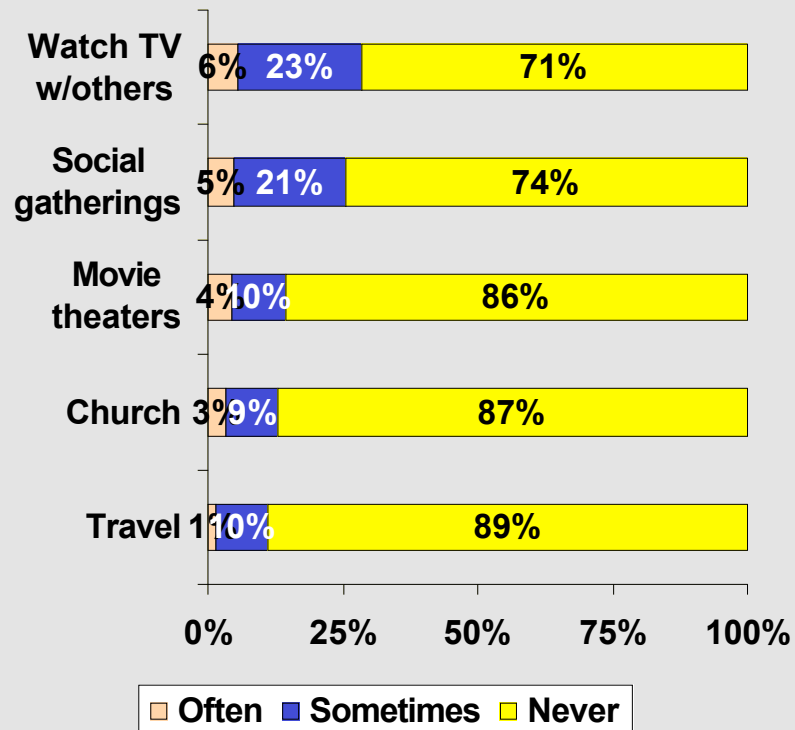
✦ Nearly two-thirds (65%) said they have trouble hearing the television (12% said Yes while another 53% said they Sometimes do).

# Problems Hearing the Television



# Avoiding Activities

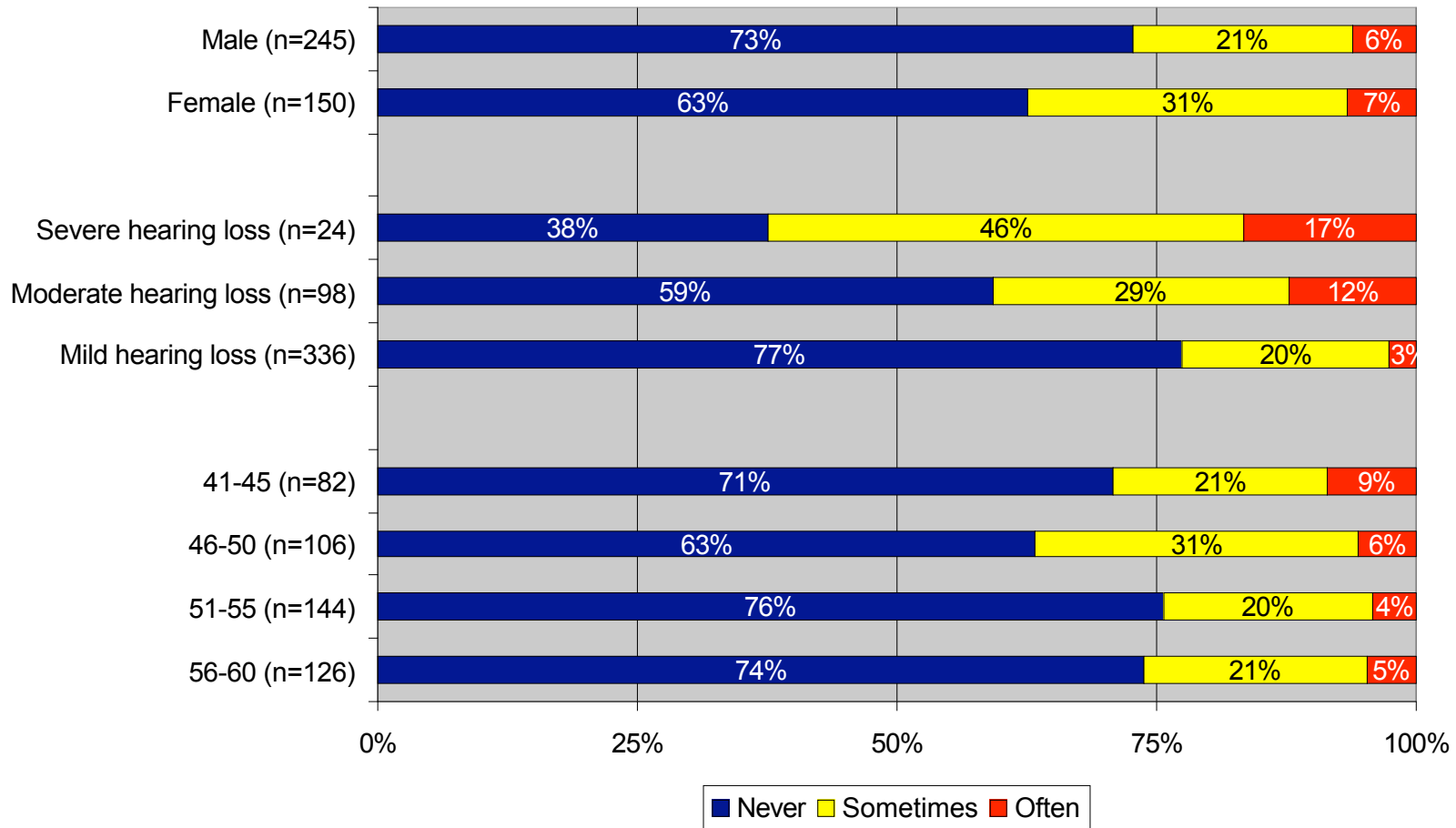
✦ **Q: How often do you find yourself avoiding the following activities because of your hearing loss?**



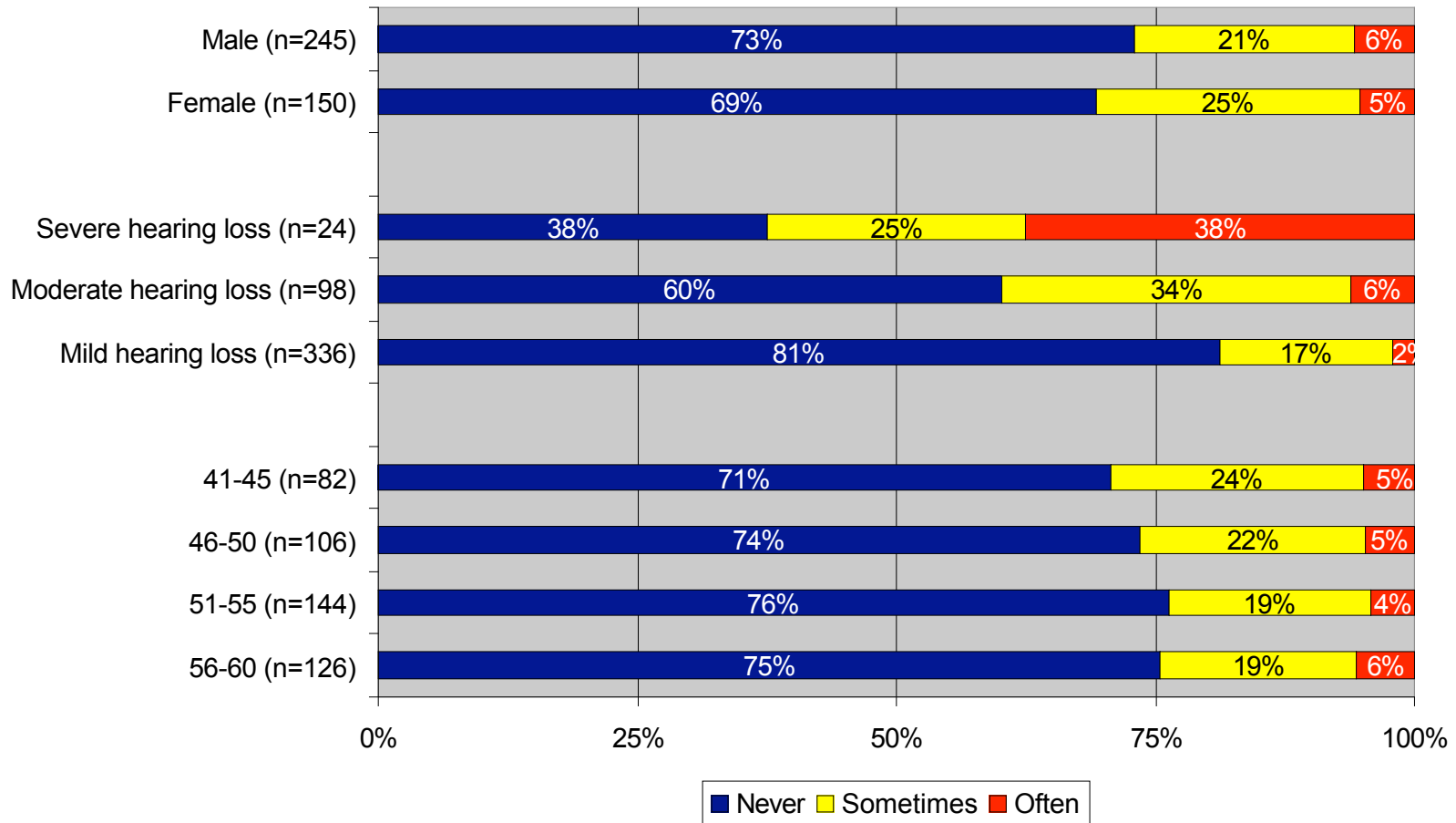
✦ Watching TV with others in the room (29% Sometimes/Often) and social gatherings (26% Sometimes/Often) are the areas that respondents find themselves avoiding most often because of their hearing loss.



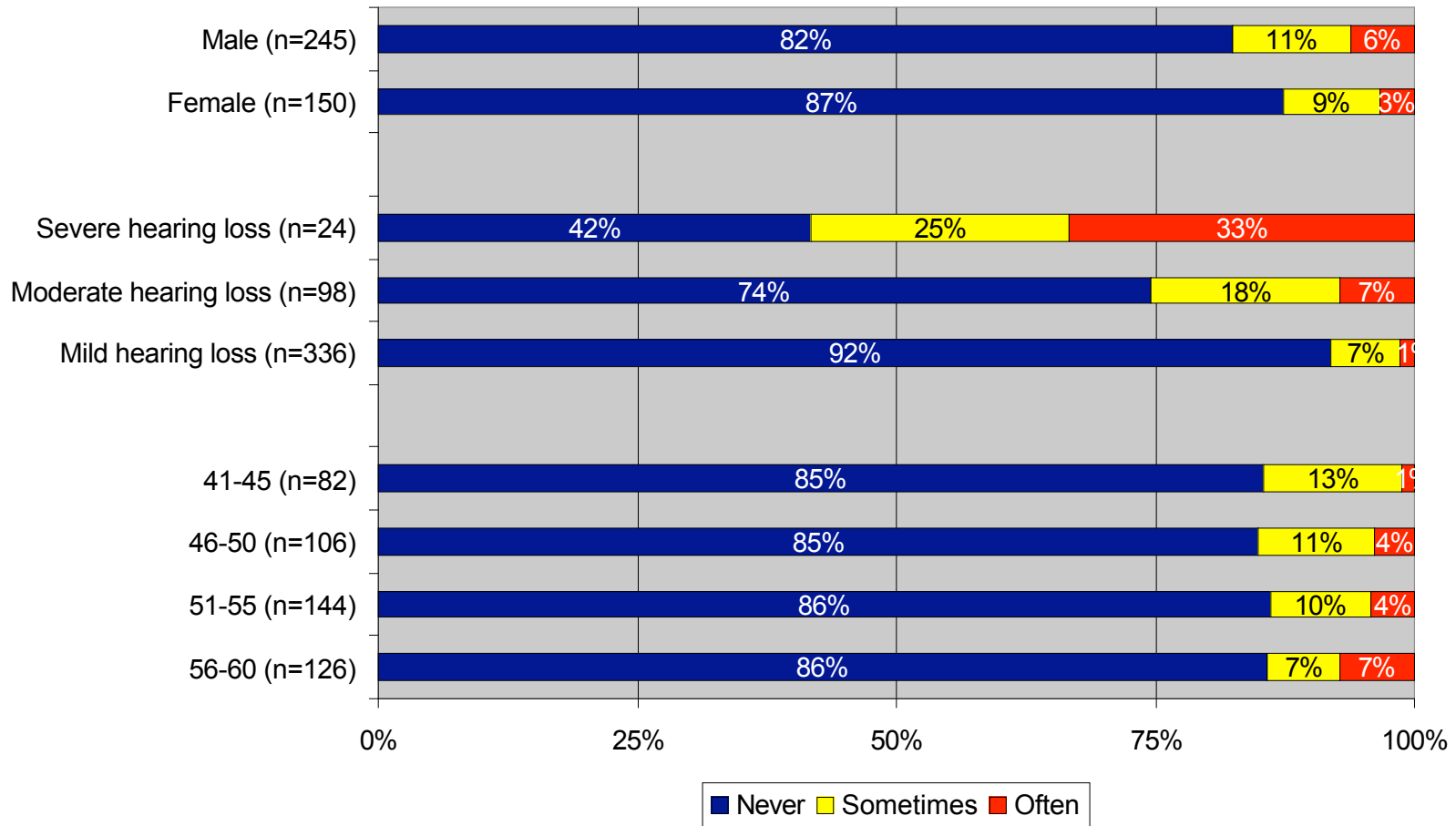
# Avoiding Activities: Watching TV with Others in Room



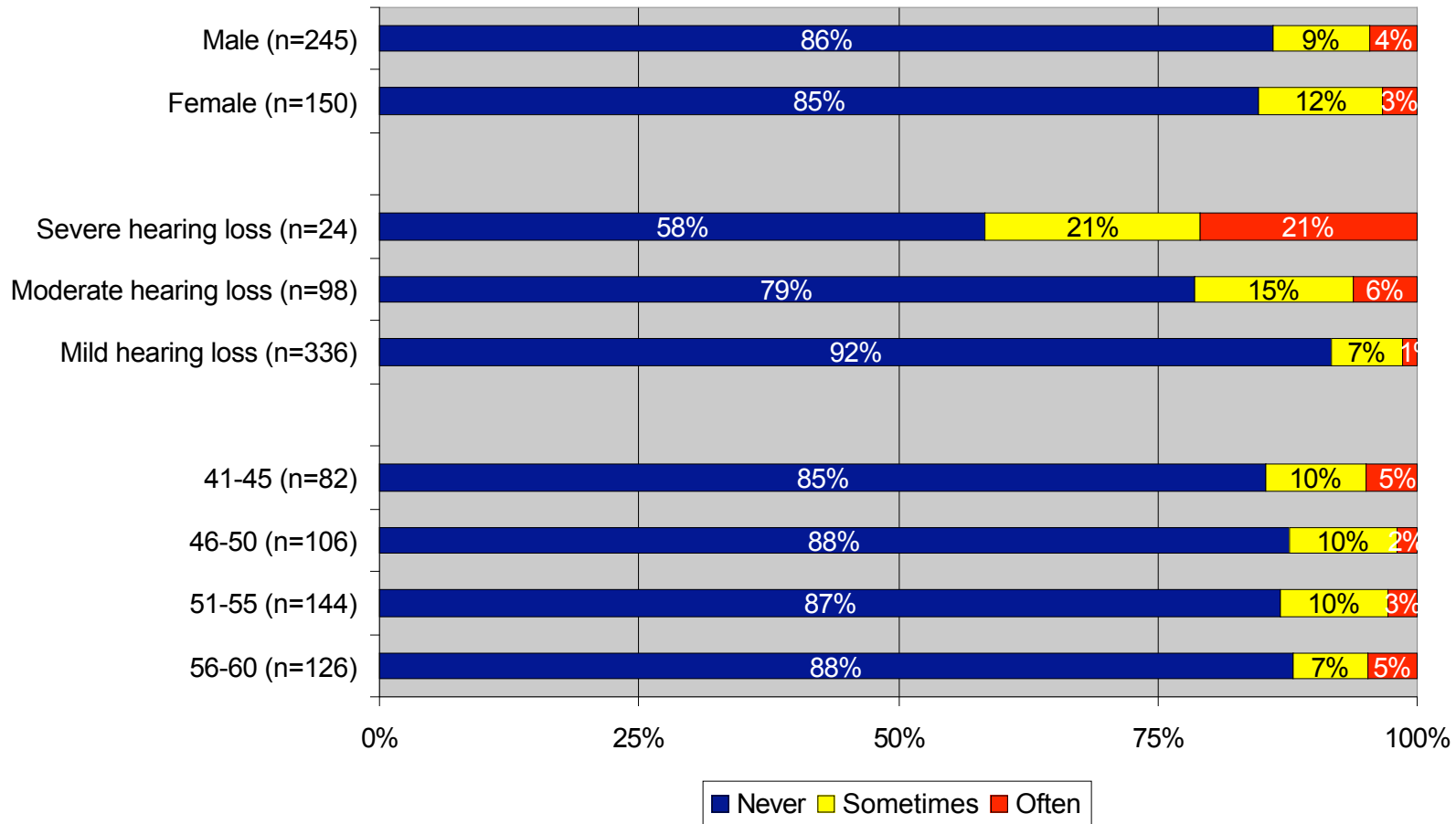
# Avoiding Activities: Social Gatherings



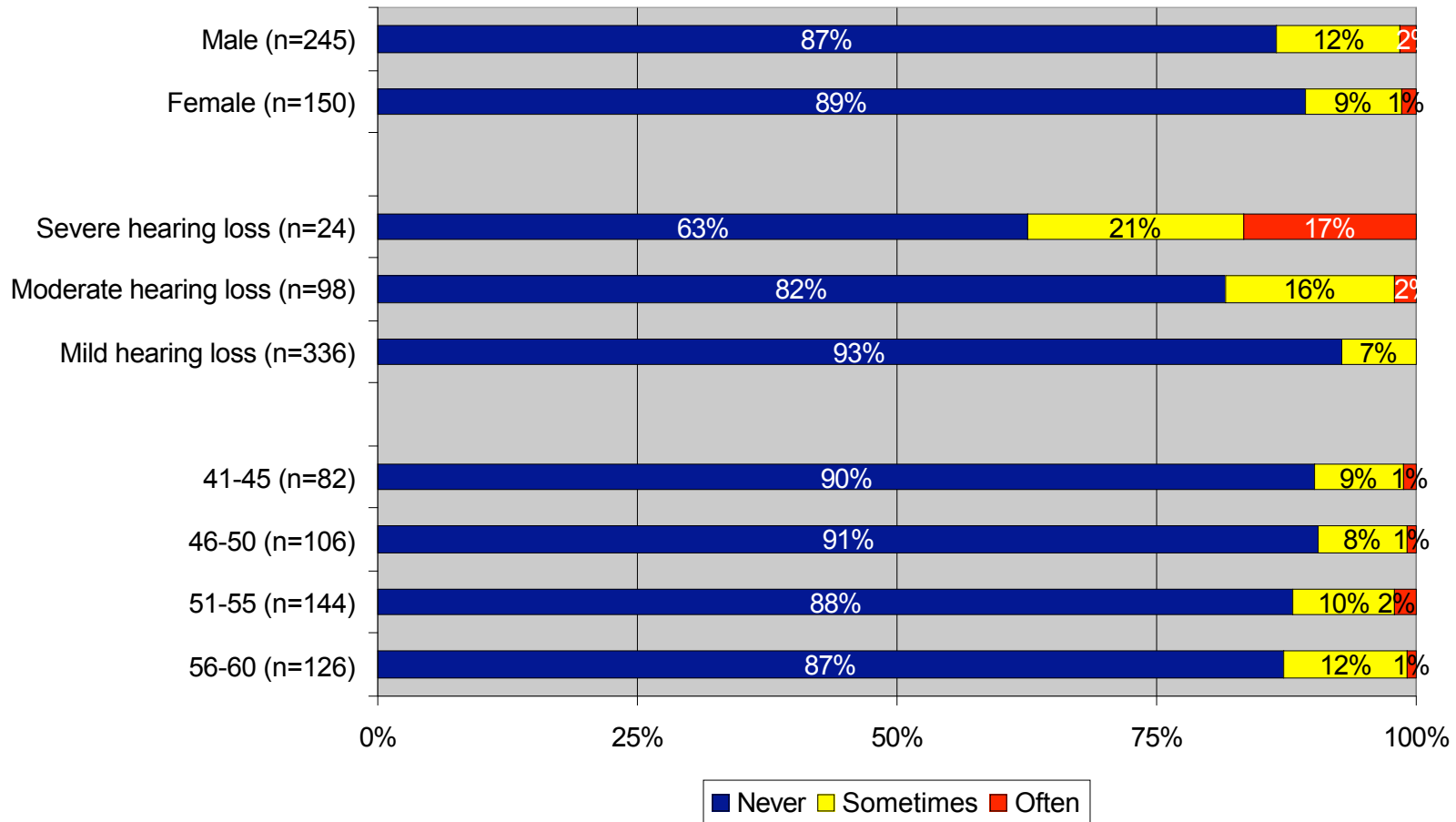
# Avoiding Activities: Movie Theaters



# Avoiding Activities: Church



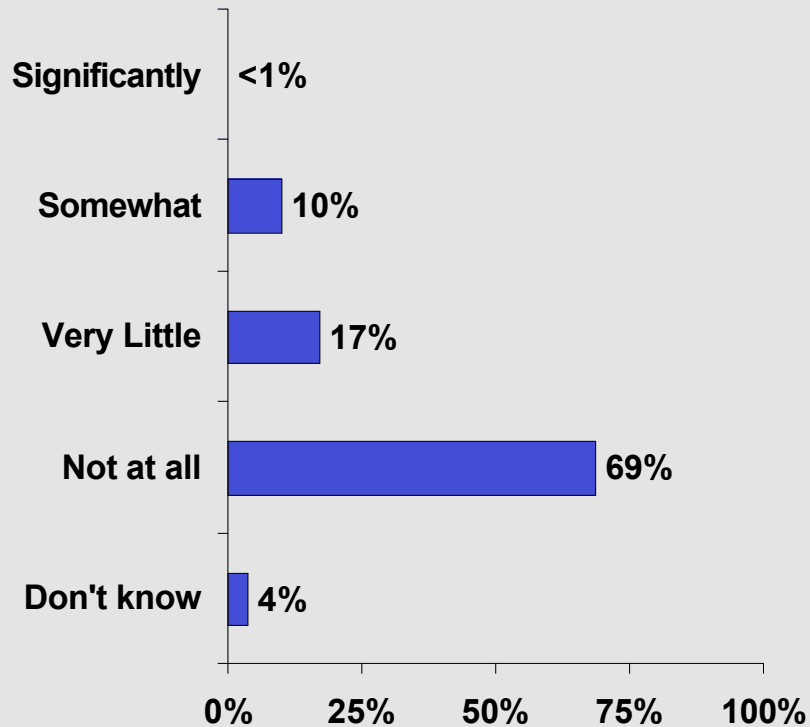
# Avoiding Activities: Travel



# Impact on Career Earnings

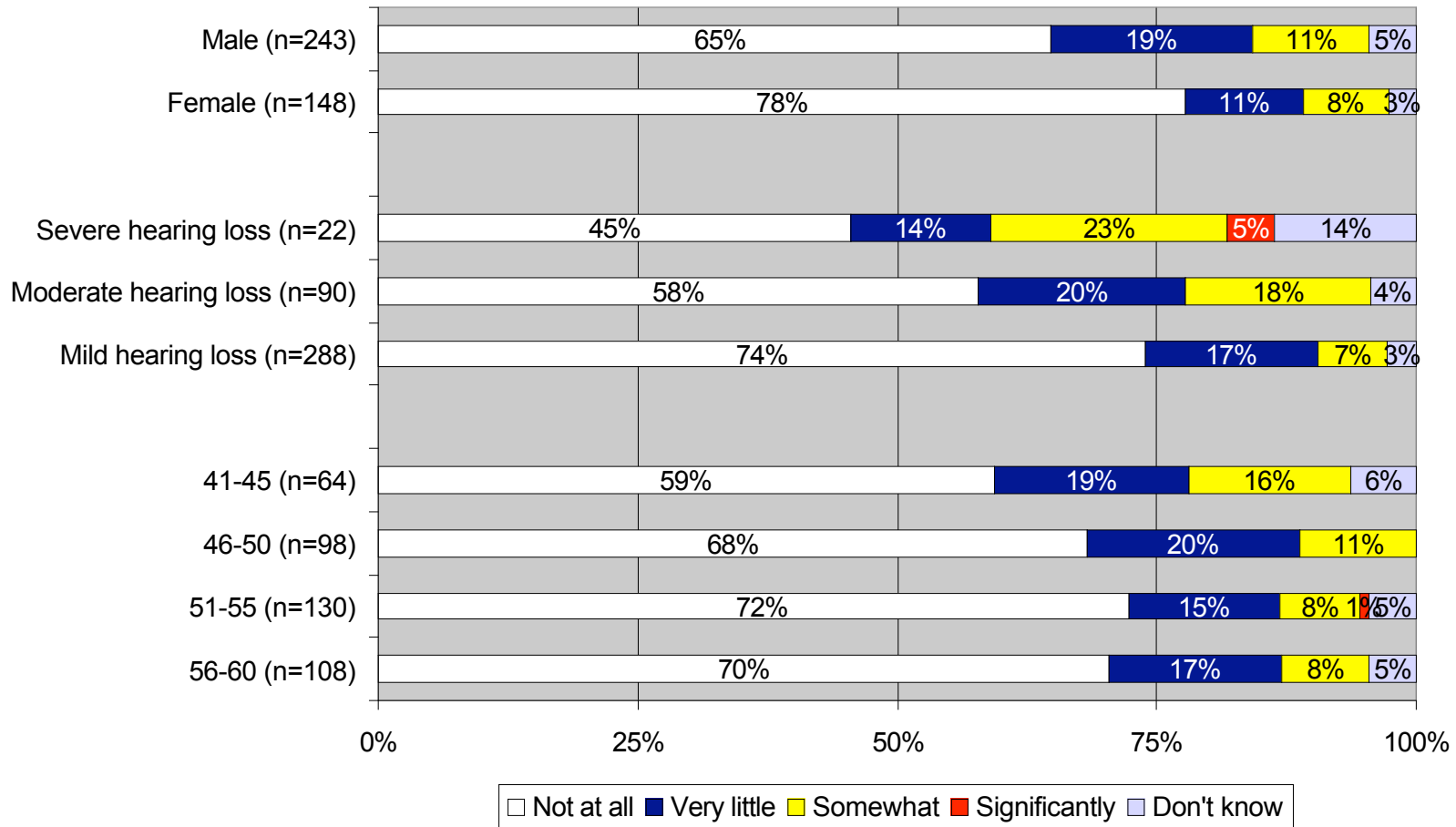
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✦ **Q: How much, if at all, do you think your hearing loss has impacted your earning potential in your career?**



✦ Overall, 27% of all respondents said their hearing loss has had at least some impact on their earning potential.

# Impact on Career Earnings



# **Demographics of the Sample**

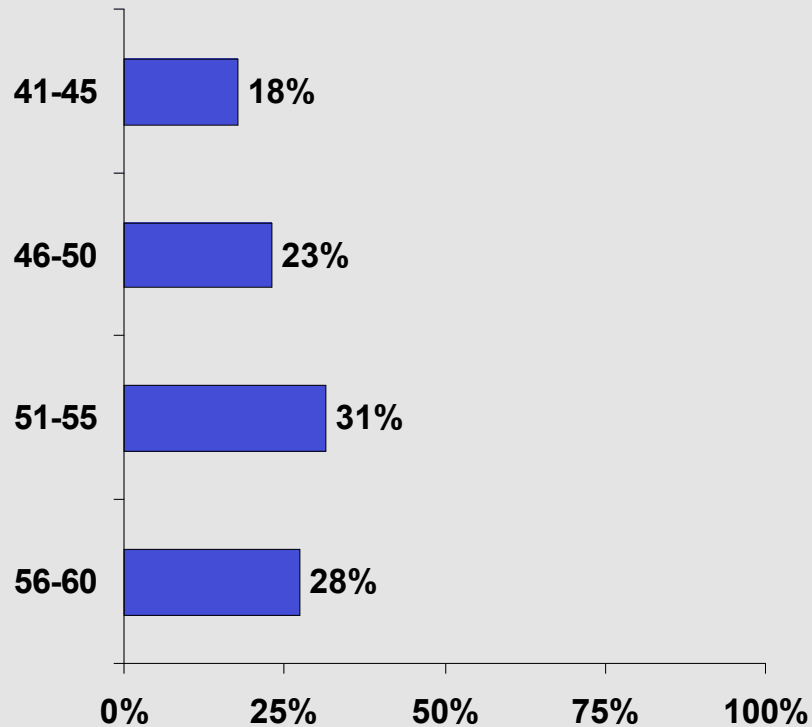
Note: Not all percentages will equal 100%  
due to rounding of individual answers.



# Age

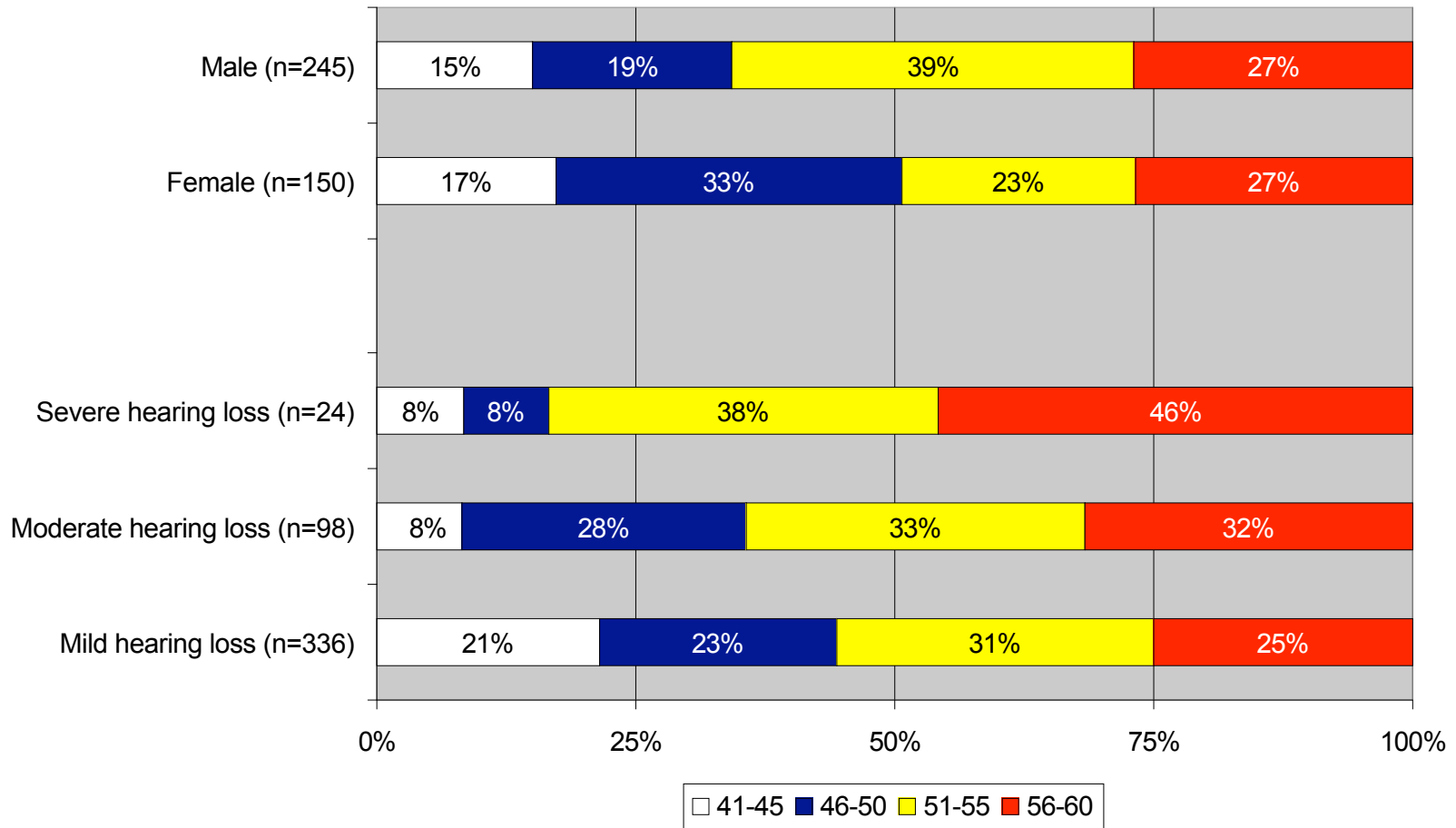
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✦ **Q: Which of the following includes your age?**



- ✦ Participants were screened for age, and needed to be ages 41-60 to participant.
- ✦ The sample skewed somewhat to the older half of the audience, as 59% were ages 51-60 compared to 41% that were ages 41-50.

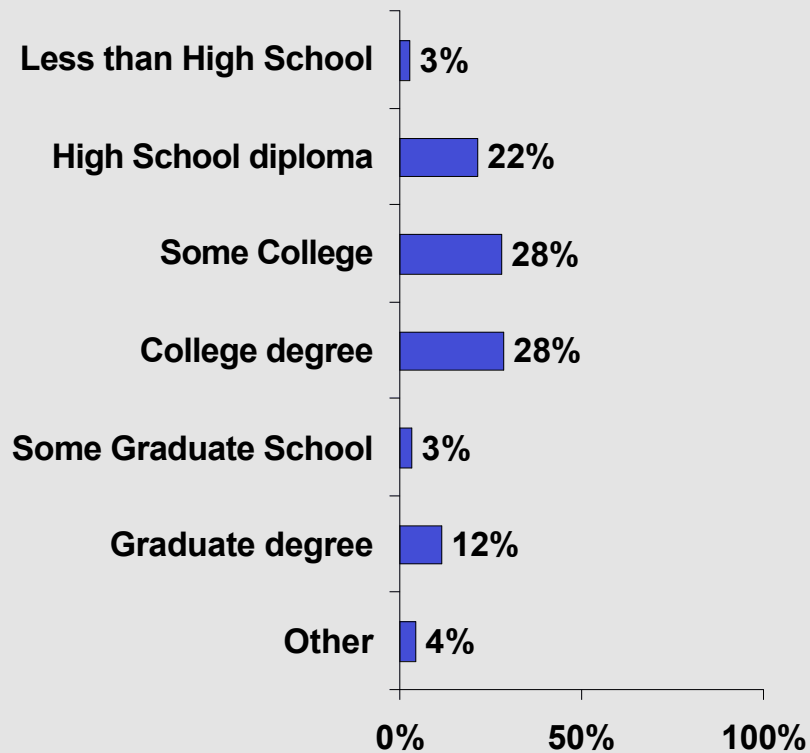
# Age



# Education

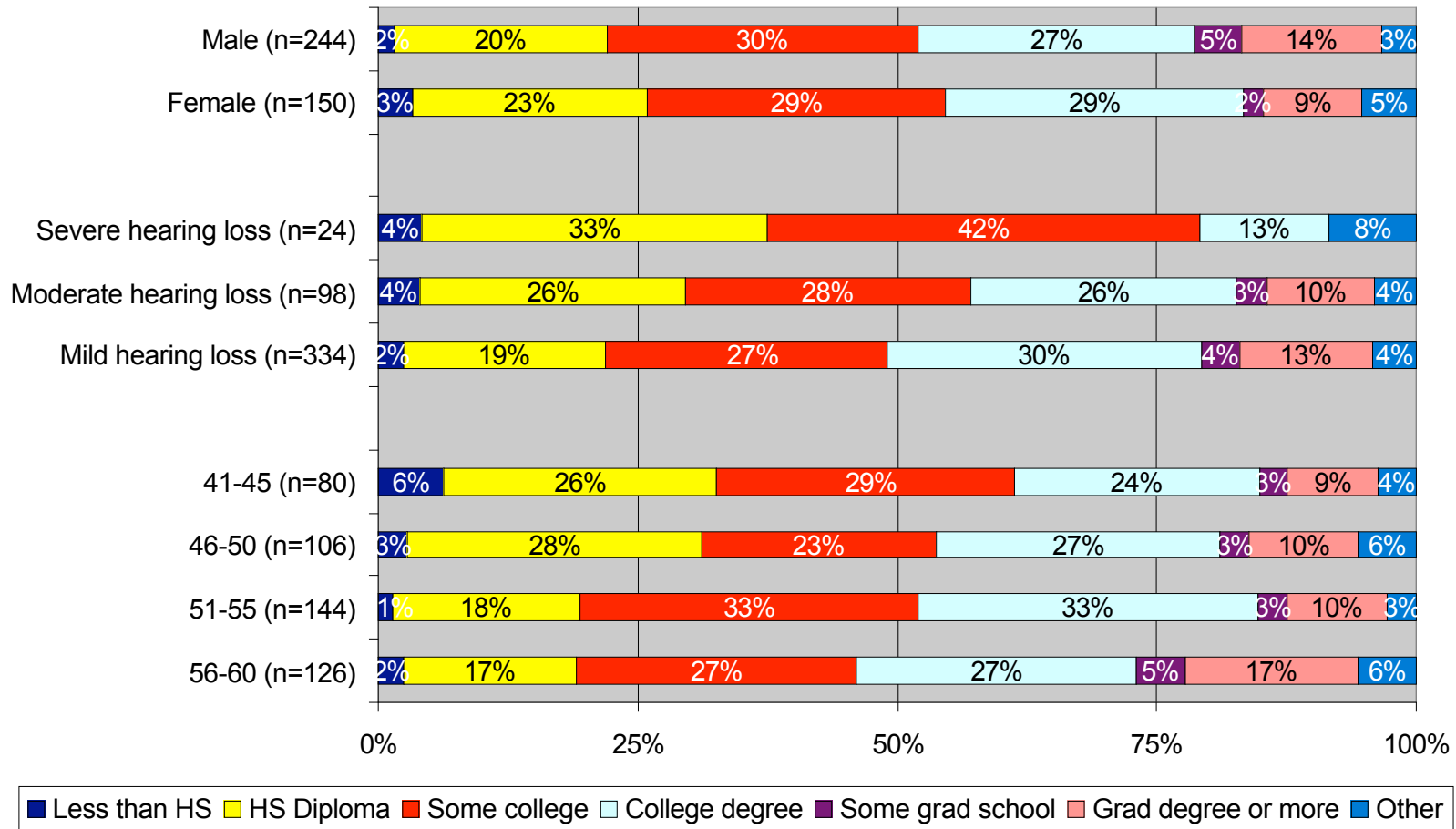
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✦ **Q: Which of the following includes your highest level of education?**



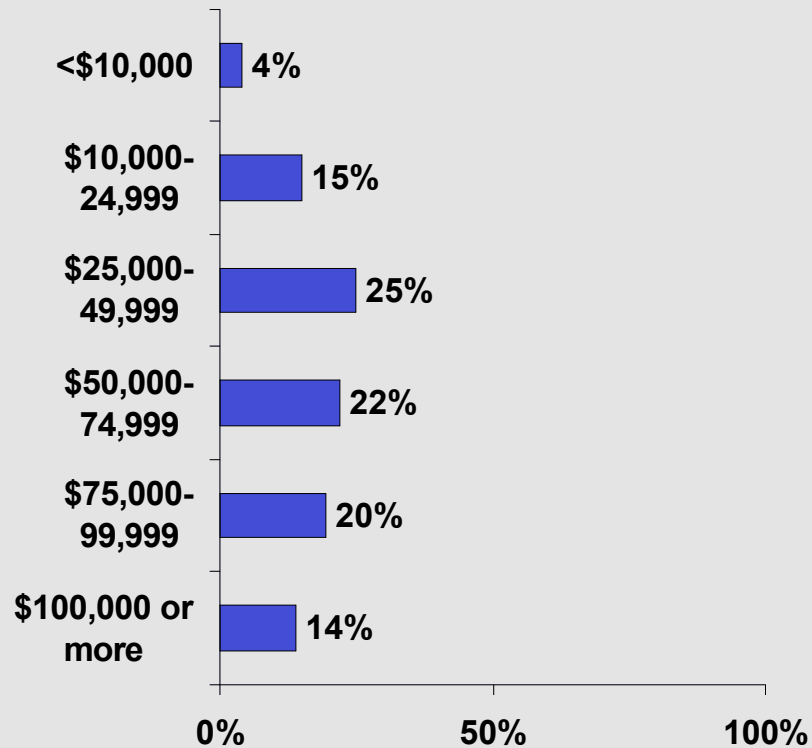
✦ Just 25% of respondents had a formal education of High School or less, while 43% had at least a college degree.

# Education



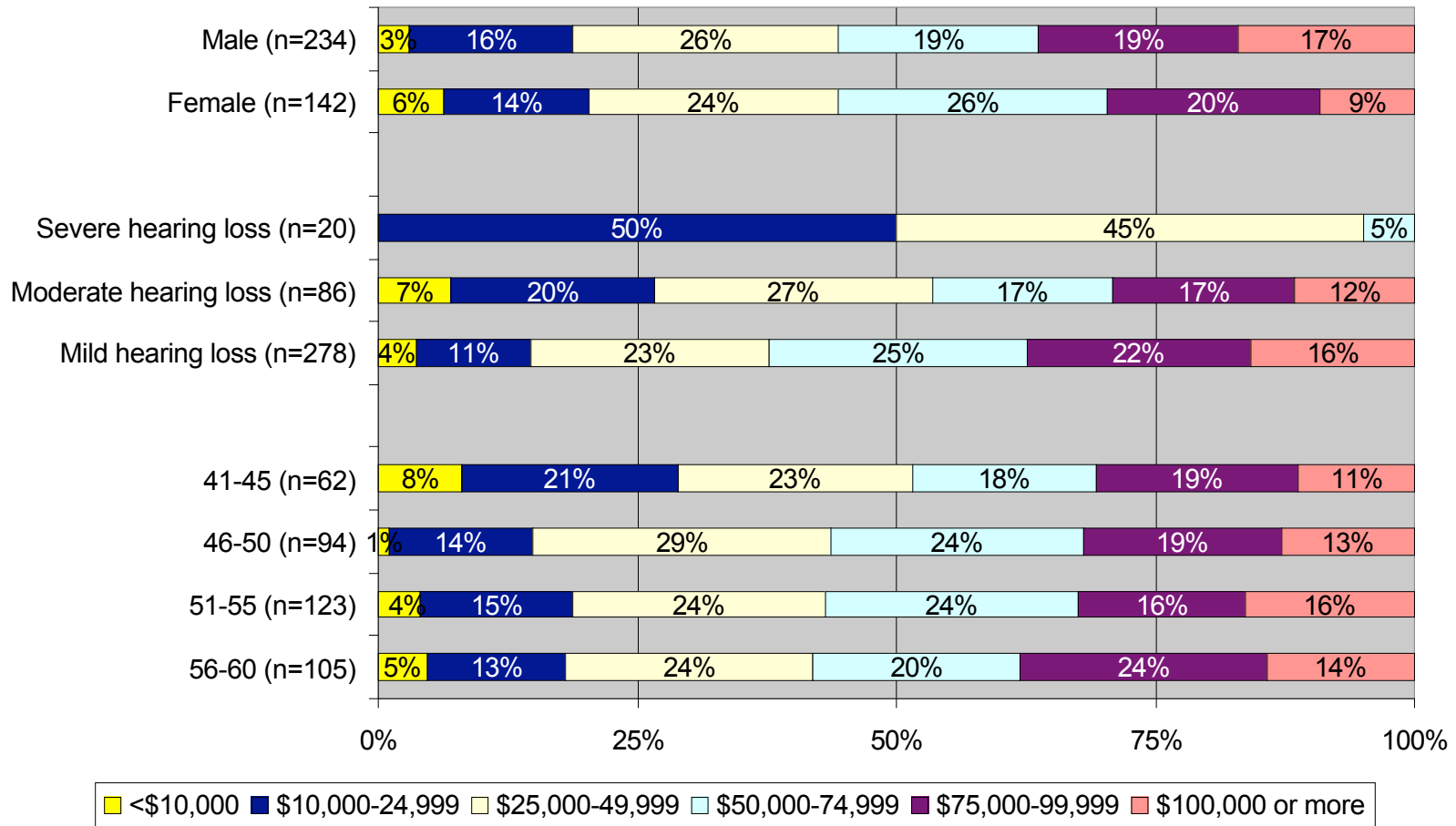
# Household Income

✦ **Q: Which of the following includes your household's total annual income?**



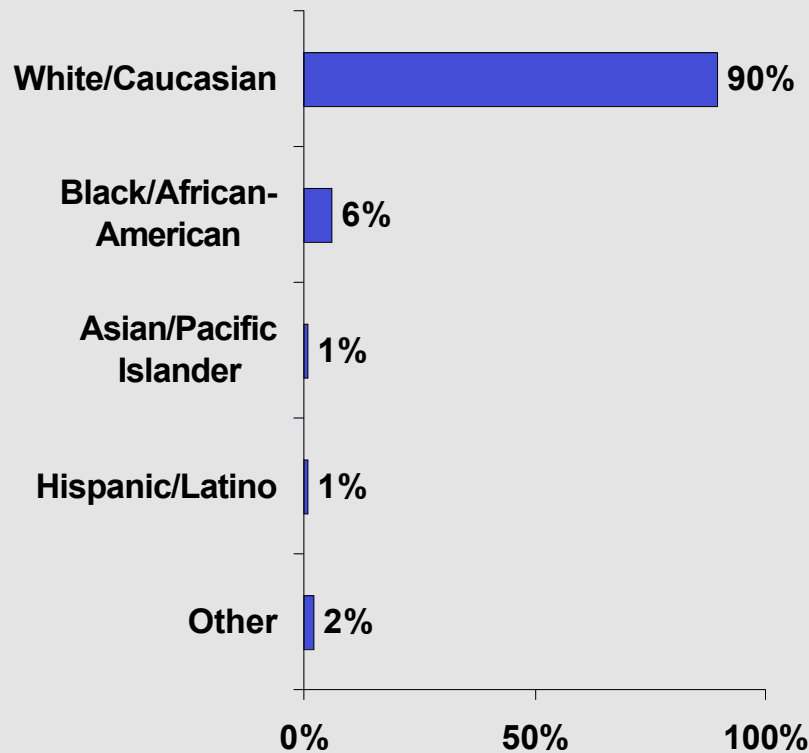
- ✦ About one-half (47%) of respondents who revealed their household income said it was \$25,000-74,999.
- ✦ Another 19% had incomes under \$25,000.
- ✦ One-third (34%) had incomes of \$75,000 or more.

# Household Income



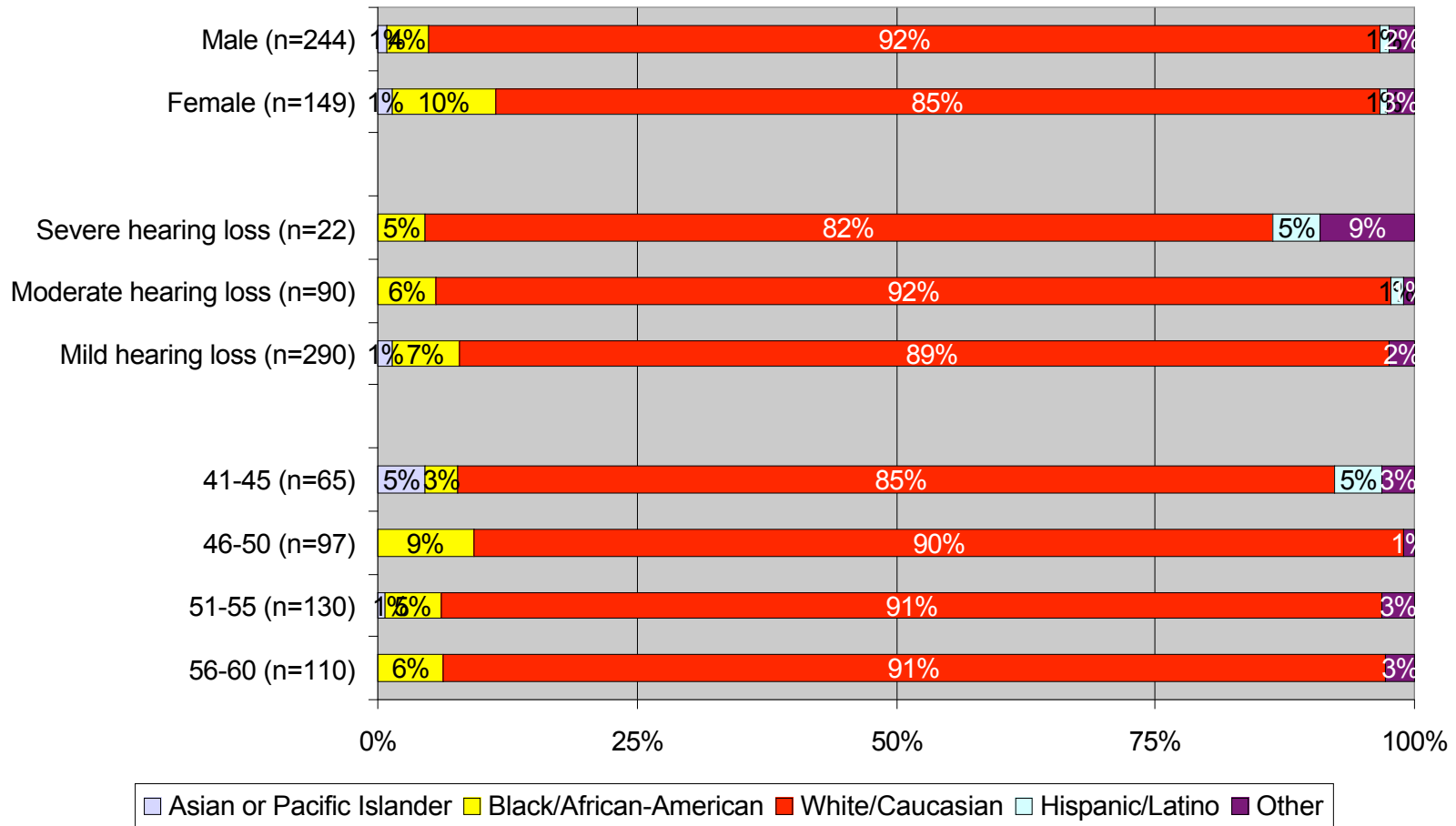
# Race/Ethnicity

✦ *Q: Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?*



- ✦ The respondents in this study were primarily White (90%).
- ✦ Non-white representation included 6% Black/African-American, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% Hispanic/Latino.

# Race/Ethnicity

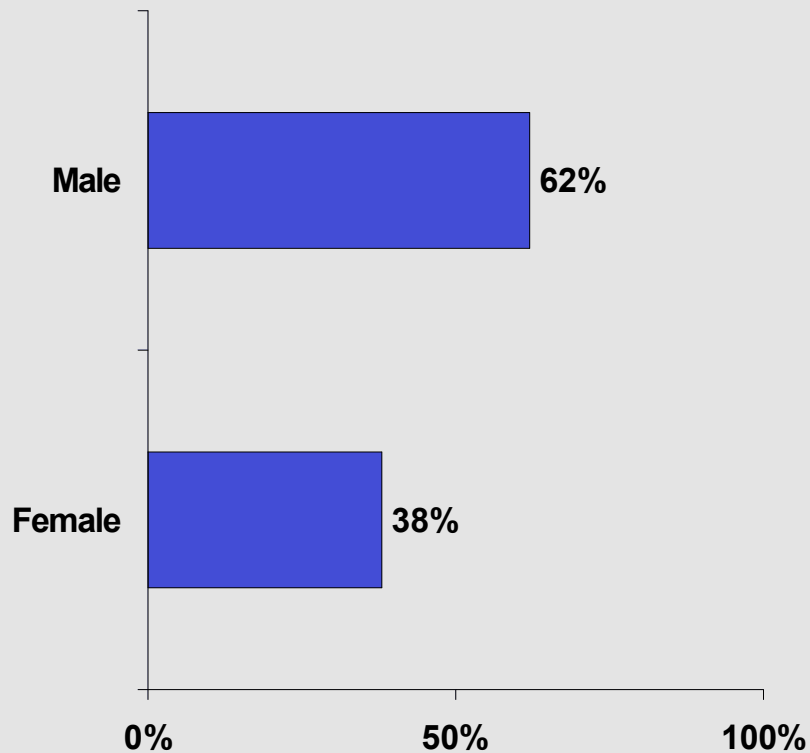




# Gender

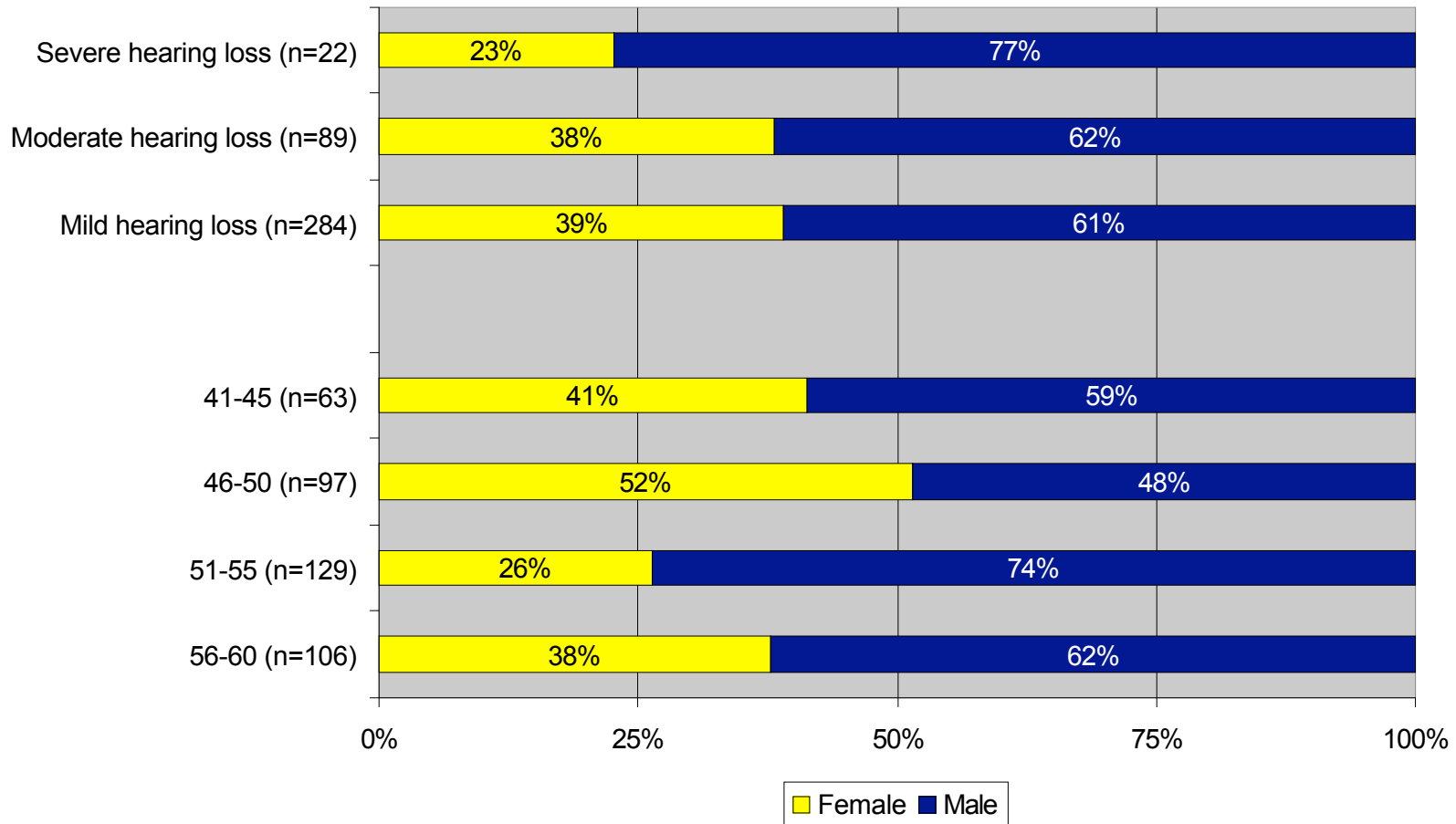
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## ✦ Q: Gender



- ✦ Interestingly, over one-half (62%) of the sample was Male. Given that respondents entered the survey at approximately 50% Male/50% Female ratio, then could only proceed based on age and an (admitted) level of hearing loss, the indication is that men are more likely than women to admit to having some level of hearing loss.

# Gender



# Appendix