

Millions of Brits are in denial of hearing loss new research reveals

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Survey uncovers denial of hearing loss which has frustrating consequences for family, friends and colleagues*.

Copenhagen, Denmark, July 30th, 2021. A third of Brits believe that they know someone who is in denial of their hearing loss, new research has revealed.

A study of 2,000 adults found that 40% thinks that one of their parents has become hard of hearing but are unwilling to admit that there is a problem. Over a quarter feel the same about a friend and 18% have a colleague who they believe isn't recognizing that they are struggling to hear.

The research, which was commissioned by hearing aid expert, Oticon (<http://www.oticon.global/>), also revealed that the most common signs that someone is struggling to hear include claiming that other people mumble, frequently asking people to repeat themselves, and having difficulty hearing conversations when there is background noise or when they are in a crowd.

Thomas Behrens, Chief of Audiology, Oticon said: "Understandably, admitting your hearing isn't what it used to be is really hard for many people. It can also be difficult to realise that there is even a problem. Hearing loss can happen gradually, so you can get used to not being able to hear your own steps or the birds chirping. Sometimes, it isn't until your partner or friends tell you that you keep saying 'pardon', that the TV is up really loud, or that you ask them to repeat everything, that you finally realise that there is a problem and need to seek support from a professional."

Broaching the delicate subject of hearing loss

More than seven in ten Brits that know someone they believe is in denial of hearing loss have communicated concern to their loved ones, according to the research. 47% have very directly told their loved ones that they think they have hearing loss, 41% regularly point out the signs of poor hearing that their loved ones are displaying, while 37% prefer a less direct approach and simply give subtle hints.

However, for many, the subject of hearing loss is taboo. Almost a quarter of those that haven't expressed their concerns to a loved one who has bad hearing choose not to because they don't feel comfortable to do so, while 42% don't think they would even be listened to.

The research shows that working, living, and socialising with someone that is likely in denial of poor hearing can affect relationships. Over a third say that they are either frustrated with not being heard or fed up with having to repeat themselves. Another 21% feel 'embarrassed' by the hearing loss symptoms that their friends, colleagues or loved ones display, such as regularly asking people to repeat themselves, or not being able to follow conversations.

A quarter even go as far as avoiding conversations with the person that is having trouble hearing because it is easier, and another quarter say that their loved one's hearing loss leads to arguments on the

subject.

The problems with not treating your hearing loss

Thomas Behrens at Oticon added: "Living with hearing loss can have many hidden effects. The impact on relationships is certainly a concern. Tackling hearing loss as soon as possible can alleviate many of the negative consequent effects and is particularly important for reducing or avoiding the adverse impact on health and quality of life that living with hearing loss can have."

The research shows just how low the awareness of how hearing loss can affect health is. Of the 2,000 respondents, less than 20% realise that untreated hearing loss can age the brain and change the way the brain actually functions. While only around half know that living with hearing loss can lead to social isolation and less than half know that hearing loss can increase the risk of depression.

Brits seem willing to put up with hearing loss

Over a third of respondents that haven't been professionally diagnosed with hearing loss say that they have problems hearing. Of those, 81% haven't sought advice or treatment. Mostly, they are willing to wait until their hearing loss affects their quality of life or gets worse than it is now. Worryingly, 25% have no plans to seek treatment.

This is despite over half finding it a struggle to hear conversation in noisy environments and almost half finding it difficult to follow conversation when many people are speaking at once. Both early warning signs that hearing ability could be faltering.

Thomas Behrens at Oticon concluded: "Potentially, millions of Brits don't realise that they have hearing loss, or don't want to admit it, but it is crucial to support a hearing problem as it could just help avoid the consequences for your health and help improve relationships. If poor hearing is affecting relations with loved ones, that is a very clear sign that it is time to take action."

-ENDS-

* Nationally representative survey of 2,000 UK adults

About Oticon

500 million people worldwide suffer from hearing loss. The majority are over the age of 50 while eight percent are under the age of 18. Oticon's vision is to create a world where people are no longer limited by hearing loss. A world where hearing aids fit seamlessly into life and help people realise their full potential, while avoiding the health consequences of hearing loss. Oticon develops and manufactures hearing aids for both adults and children and supports every kind of hearing loss from mild to profound and we pride ourselves on developing some of the most innovative hearing aids in the market.

Headquartered in Denmark, we are a global company and part of Demant with more than 16,500 employees and revenues of over DKK 15 billion. Changing technology. Changing conventions. Changing lives. Oticon – Life-changing hearing technology. www.oticon.global (<http://www.oticon.global/>)

If you would like to take the first step to find out whether you have a hearing loss, or provide a loved one with the means to, Oticon offers a free online hearing test (<https://www.oticon.global/hearing-aid-users/hearing-loss/understand-hearing-loss/hearing-test>) for your convenience.

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