



For Immediate Release

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## New Study Indicates Half of Baby Boomers Experiencing Hearing Loss

*- Hearing Loss Widespread Among Baby Boomers, Very Few Actively Seeking Help -*

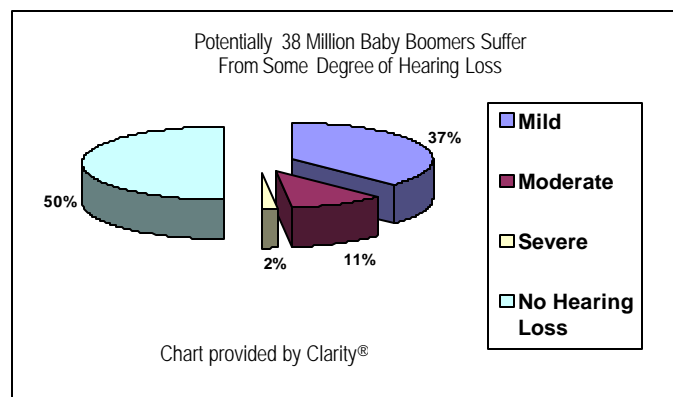
**Nashville, Tenn.** – Half of the nearly 76 million Baby Boomers in the U.S. are experiencing some degree of hearing loss, according to a compelling new research study released today by The EAR Foundation and Clarity®.

The results of the Baby Boomer Hearing Loss Study indicate that hearing loss is more widespread among Baby Boomers than previously estimated, potentially affecting 38 million people between the ages of 40 – 59. Earlier estimates from the National Health Interview Survey by the National Center for Health Statistics indicated 16 million people (20%) in a comparable age group (i.e., between ages 46 – 64) were suffering from hearing loss.

The new study looked at the occurrence, cause and impact of hearing loss on the Baby Boomer population, ages 40 to 59 – that is those born between 1945 and 1964.

Not only did the study find that half of those surveyed said they had difficulty

hearing at times, it also revealed that most people experiencing hearing loss are not seeking help



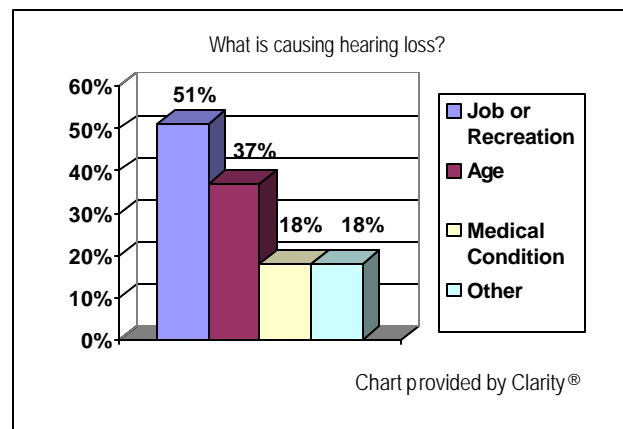
to remedy their hearing issues. Only one of every three (34%) individuals surveyed had gotten their hearing tested. It also revealed that the majority of Boomers who report hearing loss blame it on exposure to noise.

“This study indicates that Baby Boomers are losing their hearing at a more rapid pace than past generations,” said Dr. Michael Glasscock, Founder of The EAR Foundation. “Whether because of apprehension or denial, Boomers are not seeking the help they need to alleviate the affects of hearing loss. Hearing loss is a serious yet often overlooked issue, and this study will help bring it into the national spotlight so we can help this generation take the next steps on the road to better hearing.”

### The Cause

The study reports that more than half (51%) of the individuals who reported trouble hearing attributed their hearing loss to noise pollution, either on the job or during recreational activities. Noise pollution is the exposure to loud noise, such as construction equipment, rock concerts, jet planes, automobile engines or even lawn equipment.

“Baby Boomers are the first generation of rock and roll,” said Glasscock. “They have a very active lifestyle and they are used to getting what they want, from careers to family to recreation. This lifestyle lends itself to experiencing an increased amount of noise and that is why we believe Boomers have encountered more noise pollution than any other generation.”



Outside of noise pollution, the next most common cause reported was aging (37%). Only 18 percent said their hearing loss was due to a medical condition.

### The Impact

The study revealed that difficulty hearing can often create obstacles in a person's life – at home, in the workplace or in social situations. Almost half (46%) of the individuals who reported having some difficulty hearing said they were most affected by the loss at home. Furthermore, 44 percent said that hearing loss caused problems for them in social situations.

Hearing loss also can have a significant impact on how a person communicates with others. More than one-third (35%) said they have difficulty hearing and understanding telephone conversations, 24 percent said their hearing loss made them feel misunderstood, and 9 percent said they felt isolated.

"Whether it's having to turn up the TV at home, asking your child to repeat themselves at dinner or not understanding a friend during a telephone conversation, hearing loss can affect your normal routine in many ways," said Glasscock. "People with hearing loss will often ignore the issue and tread through difficult situations. These results confirm that hearing loss is impacting people's lives, and it should no longer be ignored."

### **Seeking Help**

Admitting a problem doesn't necessarily translate to finding a solution. Most of the individuals who said they had difficulty hearing were doing very little to find appropriate care or products to alleviate their hearing issues.

The study indicated that only one in every six (15%) individuals has been medically diagnosed. And only one in three (34%) has gotten his or her hearing tested. This indicates that many of those with hearing loss are not seeking appropriate hearing health care, such as meeting with an audiologist or discussing hearing with their primary care physician.

### **Finding Solutions**

Although the survey shows that a large majority of the individuals who reported having difficulty hearing are not actually seeking treatment, it did find that most Baby Boomers are well-informed in general about products that can improve hearing.

Almost all (97%) of the respondents said they were aware of hearing aids. Almost 80 percent were aware of amplified telephones, which boost high-frequency sounds often missed during telephone conversations.

“Baby Boomers need to take advantage of both audiology testing and the wealth of products for better hearing that are available to them,” said Carsten Trads, president of Clarity. “There is no need for either Boomers or their loved ones to literally suffer in silence. We urge anyone who thinks they may be experiencing hearing loss to contact an audiologist, and seek information about the many convenient and economical devices – from hearing aids to amplified telephones to assistive listening technology – on the market today.”

The research was conducted by an independent research company, Prince Market Research, a member of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. The research methodology was designed to ensure that the results are accurate within a margin of error of plus or minus five percent at a 95 percent confidence level. To access the full report, visit:

[www.clarityproducts.com/boomer](http://www.clarityproducts.com/boomer)

### **About The EAR Foundation**

The EAR (Education and Auditory Research) Foundation was established by Dr. Michael E. Glasscock III in 1971. This association of physicians, educators and concerned citizens exists for three basic purposes:

- To provide the general public support services that promote integrating people with hearing and balance impairments into mainstream society;
- To provide practicing hearing specialists with continuing medical education courses and related programs specifically addressing rehabilitation and hearing preservation; and
- To educate young people and adults about hearing preservation and early detection of hearing loss, enabling them to prevent hearing and balance disorders at an early age.

The mission of the organization is to provide information and resources to people of every age who are hearing impaired. For more information on The EAR Foundation, visit [www.earfoundation.org](http://www.earfoundation.org).

## **About Clarity®**

Clarity®, a Division of Plantronics Inc. (NYSE:PLT), ([www.clarityproducts.com](http://www.clarityproducts.com)) is a leading supplier of amplified telephones, notification systems, assistive listening devices and other communications devices for the hearing loss and deaf markets. A leader in sound amplification, Clarity's patented technology, Clarity® Power™, provides customized solutions for customers who otherwise could not communicate easily and effectively with the outside world. As more people begin to address their hearing needs, Clarity will continue to provide effective technologies that are simple and easy to use. The company began in 1969 as a telecommunications manufacturer, and was acquired in 1986 by Plantronics, Inc., a leading provider of headsets to business and individual consumers worldwide.

## **About Plantronics**

Plantronics introduced the first lightweight communications headset in 1962 and is recognized as the world leader in communications headsets. A publicly held company with approximately 2,500 employees, Plantronics is the leading provider of headsets to telephone companies and the business community worldwide. Plantronics headsets also are used widely in many Fortune 500 corporations and have been featured in numerous motion pictures and high-profile events, including Neil Armstrong's historic "One small step for man" transmission from the moon in 1969. Plantronics, Inc., headquartered in Santa Cruz, California, was founded in 1961 and maintains offices in 20 countries. Plantronics products are sold and supported through a worldwide network of authorized Plantronics marketing partners. Information about the company and its products can be found at [www.plantronics.com](http://www.plantronics.com) or by calling (800) 544-4660.

*This press release contains forward-looking statements that are subject to risks and uncertainties. All statements other than statements of historical fact are statements that could be deemed as forward-looking statements. Risks, uncertainties and assumptions include the possibility that Clarity may fail to meet market growth opportunities and that the Clarity Power technology may not perform as we anticipate, and other risks as described from time to time in Plantronics Securities and Exchange Commission reports, including but not limited to Plantronics report on Form 10-Q filed on November 7, 2003 and Plantronics' annual report on Form 10-K filed on June 2, 2003. These filings can be accessed over the Internet at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov). If any of these risks or*

*uncertainties materialize or any of these assumptions prove incorrect, Plantronics' results could differ materially from Plantronics' expectations. Plantronics assumes no obligation and does not intend to update these forward-looking statements. Statements made in this press release are based on current information and expectations and there are important factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those anticipated by any such statements.*

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