

Prevalence of hearing loss

- In Spain, there are over 1,230,000 people with hearing disabilities of different types and degrees, in addition to 3,400 children between the ages of two and five. Total: **1,233,400 people with hearing disability, of whom more than 98% use spoken language to communicate**. According to the National Statistics Institute (INE), 27,300 people (2%) use sign language.
(Survey into Disability, Personal Autonomy and Situations of Dependence 2020, INE)
- **50% of teenagers and young people aged 12 to 35** in more developed countries are at risk of hearing loss due to overexposure to noise in recreational contexts and inappropriate use of devices.
(World Health Organization)
- **Presbycusis** (deafness caused by the ageing of the auditory system) affects approximately **30 % of the general population between 65-70 years of age**, reaching **80 % of those over 75 years of age**. Noise pollution and lifestyle are leading to an increase in progressive or age-related hearing loss, which also appears early, **around the age of 50**.
(The Spanish Society of Otorhinolaryngology)
- **10.6 % of the population have hearing problems** of different types and degrees, that make it difficult for them to follow a conversation in a normal tone of voice. (Eurotrak Study in Spain 2023) (Asociación Nacional de Audioprotesistas)
- **One in every thousand people in the general population will become deaf during their lifetime.**



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WORLD DEAF DAY

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FIAPAS MANIFESTO



CONFEDERACIÓN
ESPAÑOLA
DE FAMILIAS
DE PERSONAS SORDAS

SPANISH CONFEDERATION OF FAMILIES OF DEAF PEOPLE

WORLD DEAF DAY 2025

FIAPAS MANIFESTO

RIGHT TO HEAR

To mark World Deaf Day, the Spanish Confederation of Families of Deaf People (FIAPAS) is keen to present to society and the public authorities the following Manifesto.

Preventing hearing loss, detecting and treating it early is a collective duty and a prerequisite for ensuring basic human rights, well-being, autonomy and participation of people with hearing loss.

Claiming the **right to hear** for a person with hearing loss, paradoxical as it may seem, is the first demand **to guarantee the full exercise of their rights**.

On human rights and fundamental rights

From a human rights-based approach, countries are committed to developing policies and services that effectively guarantee the exercise of human rights, as well as other fundamental rights, enshrined in their legal framework.

Therefore, from a health, educational and social point of view, **the right to hear must be guaranteed throughout life**.

Despite shortcomings and unresolved improvements, in Spain, the prevention and early detection of its diagnosis and treatment are part of the common services portfolio of the National Health System. Its implementation across Spain has changed the socio-educational perspective of people with hearing loss thanks to early access to auditory stimulation and oral communication, driven by medical, audiological and prosthetic advances, specialised speech therapy intervention and family support.

Similarly, **throughout childhood and youth**, a system of monitoring and protection of hearing health is needed through protocols for early detection of postnatal hearing loss (late onset, progressive or acquired), as well as the promotion of listening habits to prevent future hearing loss or the worsening of pre-existing hearing loss.

In the case of the **older people**, in addition to the above, public policy planning should incorporate the *hearing-aging* connection as a basic element of prevention and care protocols for this age group, given the impact of hearing loss in relation to cognitive impairment, mobility, emotional state and the active and autonomous life of the older person.

Of the infringement of rights, if the right to hear is not guaranteed

For people with hearing loss, regardless of their age, hearing aids and assistive products that make their hearing functional and ensure hearing accessibility are essential for their health, education, well-being, inclusion and participation in their environment (family, education, work and social). In short, for the exercise of their rights, as a person, as a citizen.

Lack of awareness of the importance and priority of hearing health, its prevention, diagnosis and treatment, together with exposure to noise and noise pollution, which prematurely age the auditory system, as well as barriers in access to prostheses and hearing aids, **jeopardise the full exercise of rights**, as this translates into a lack of necessary means, resources and services that are neither guaranteed nor implemented.

Ultimately, if the right to hear is not guaranteed, not only the right to health is compromised, but also the exercise of fundamental rights related to education, work, citizen participation, access to information and communication, and active ageing.

Therefore, a **comprehensive hearing health policy** must be adopted **that covers all relevant sectors in a cross-cutting manner and supports the individuals throughout their life**.

THEREFORE, WE CALL FOR

- ✓ **Universal access to the orthopaedic benefit:** hearing aids without age discrimination (currently only available up to the age of 26).
- ✓ **Screening and treatment programmes for hearing loss** throughout the paediatric age group and in individuals over the age of 50.
- ✓ **Public health and primary prevention policies** aimed at understanding **noise-induced hearing damage and the impact of noise pollution**.
- ✓ **Hearing support products and other technologies** that make **hearing accessibility, information accessibility and speech communication effective in any environment**.
- ✓ **The explicit incorporation of hearing accessibility in the legal system, as recognition of the rights of people with hearing loss who use hearing aids and implants, and whose access to information, communication and interaction in the environment is auditory**.