

Press Release

Ageing and hearing care sectors join forces to raise awareness of the link between hearing and healthy ageing, and the importance of improving access to hearing care for older adults

10 February 2021 – Age-related hearing loss is the most common sensory impairment among older people and the third most common cause of ‘years lived with disability’.¹ In fact, hearing and vision loss combined are the second largest contributor to rehabilitation needs around the world.²

Sensory capabilities, including hearing, decline with age, often starting in mid-life and increasing dramatically over the age of 80 years.³ Today, substantial hearing loss affects 466 million people,⁴ accounting for approximately 65% of the global population aged 60 years and older.⁵

Despite a growing array of effective, cost-efficient, and accessible treatment options and technologies that assist adults with hearing loss,⁶ many older people live with undiagnosed and untreated hearing loss that compromises their daily functioning and increases their risk for various age-related health issues. Addressing hearing loss in older adults is critical to address considering the vast economic and social contributions older people make to their families and communities.⁷

Today, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) together with leaders from the fields of audiology, or otolaryngology, psychology, dementia research, geriatric medicine, gerontology, academic, public health, government, industry, and NGOs launch a [Statement of Intent](#) based on the findings from the “Think Tank on Hearing in Later Life” convened in November 2020.

The statement emphasizes five key areas of action that need to be taken to improve hearing care for older adults:

1. Increase awareness and tackle stigma
2. Synthesize and disseminate knowledge to change practice in the context of healthy ageing
3. Articulate economic advantages of hearing care and elevating hearing loss as a public health concern
4. Promote equity and access to hearing care
5. Apply evidence to guide actions

Learn more by reading and sharing the messages from the [Statement of Intent](#) which is pertinent given the forthcoming [WHO World Report on Hearing](#) (launching 3 March) and the [UN Decade of Healthy Ageing](#) (2021-2030) which aims to maximize the functional abilities of older people through the delivery of person-centered integrated health and social care within age-friendly environments.

Media Contact

For more information or interview opportunities, please contact Ms Berenice Anaya, Media, Marketing and Communications Officer, IFA at BAmaya@ifa.ngo.

About the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

IFA is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) with a unique membership base comprising government, NGOs, academics, industry, and individuals in over 80 countries. Now over 45 years old, the IFA has become known as a leading and innovative organization that works across disciplines and sectors toward common goals that improve the lives of older people. Through IFA's formal relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and general consultative status at the United Nations and its agencies, the IFA is in the position to advocate directly with member states and contribute to and inform intergovernmental dialogue.

¹ World Health Organization (2021). YLD Estimates 2000-2019 – Global Summary Estimates. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/global-health-estimates-leading-causes-of-dalys>

² Cieza, A., Causey, K., Kamenov, K., Hanson, S. W., Chatterji, S., & Vos, T. (2020). Global estimates of the need for rehabilitation based on the Global Burden of Disease study 2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. *The Lancet*, 396(10267), 2006-2017.

³ Davis, A., McMahon, C. M., Pichora-Fuller, K. M., Russ, S., Lin, F., Olusanya, B. O., ... & Tremblay, K. L. (2016). Aging and hearing health: the life-course approach. *The Gerontologist*, 56(Suppl_2), S256-S267.

⁴ World Health Organization (2021). Deafness and hearing loss. Key facts. Retrieved from:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss#:~:text=Over%205%25%20of%20the%20world's,will%20have%20disabling%20hearing%20loss.>

⁵ Chadha, S. (2020). WHO World Report on Hearing – Think Tank on Hearing in Later Life. Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNxrUEYpGUs&list=PLYFPhdCNDjeoflQHiFUTY6gao12beqtG&index=2&t=550s>

⁶ World Health Organization (2021). Deafness and hearing loss. Key facts. Retrieved from:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss#:~:text=Over%205%25%20of%20the%20world's,will%20have%20disabling%20hearing%20loss.>

⁷ Cook, J. (2011). The socio-economic contribution of older people in the UK. Working with Older People.

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/13663661111191257/full/html>