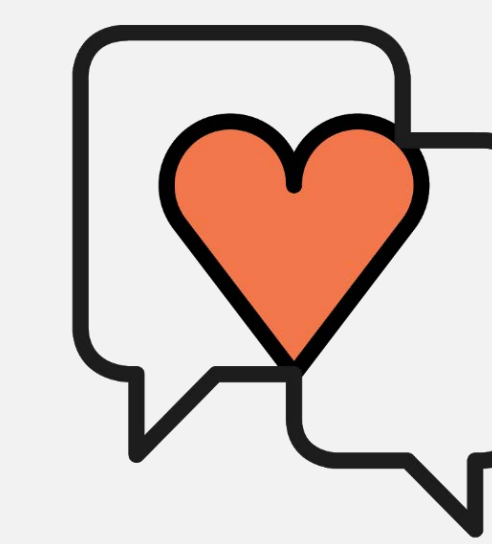


# Can Community Health Workers Make Hearing Health Care More Accessible for Older Adults?

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**HEARS**  
HEAR. LIVE. LOVE.



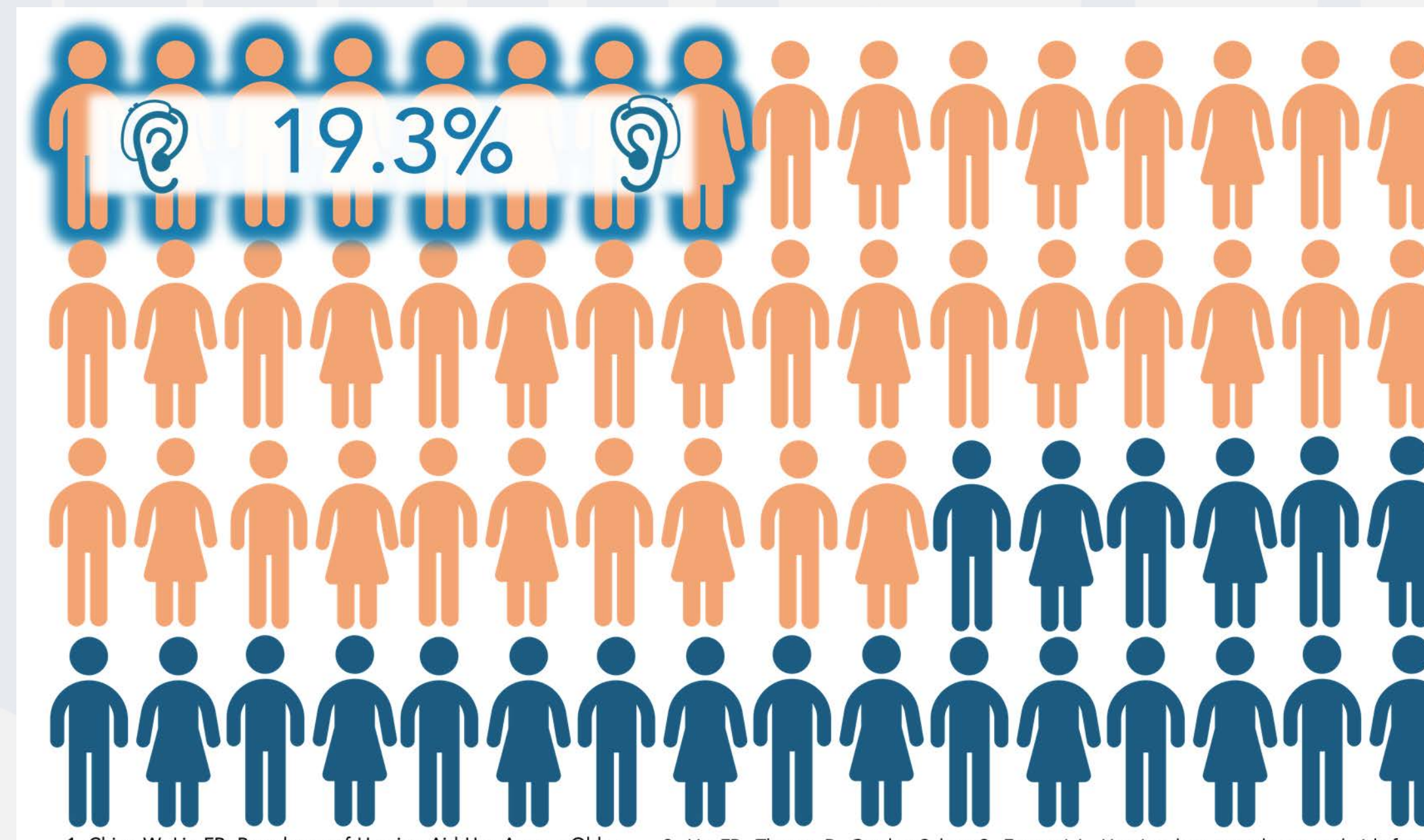
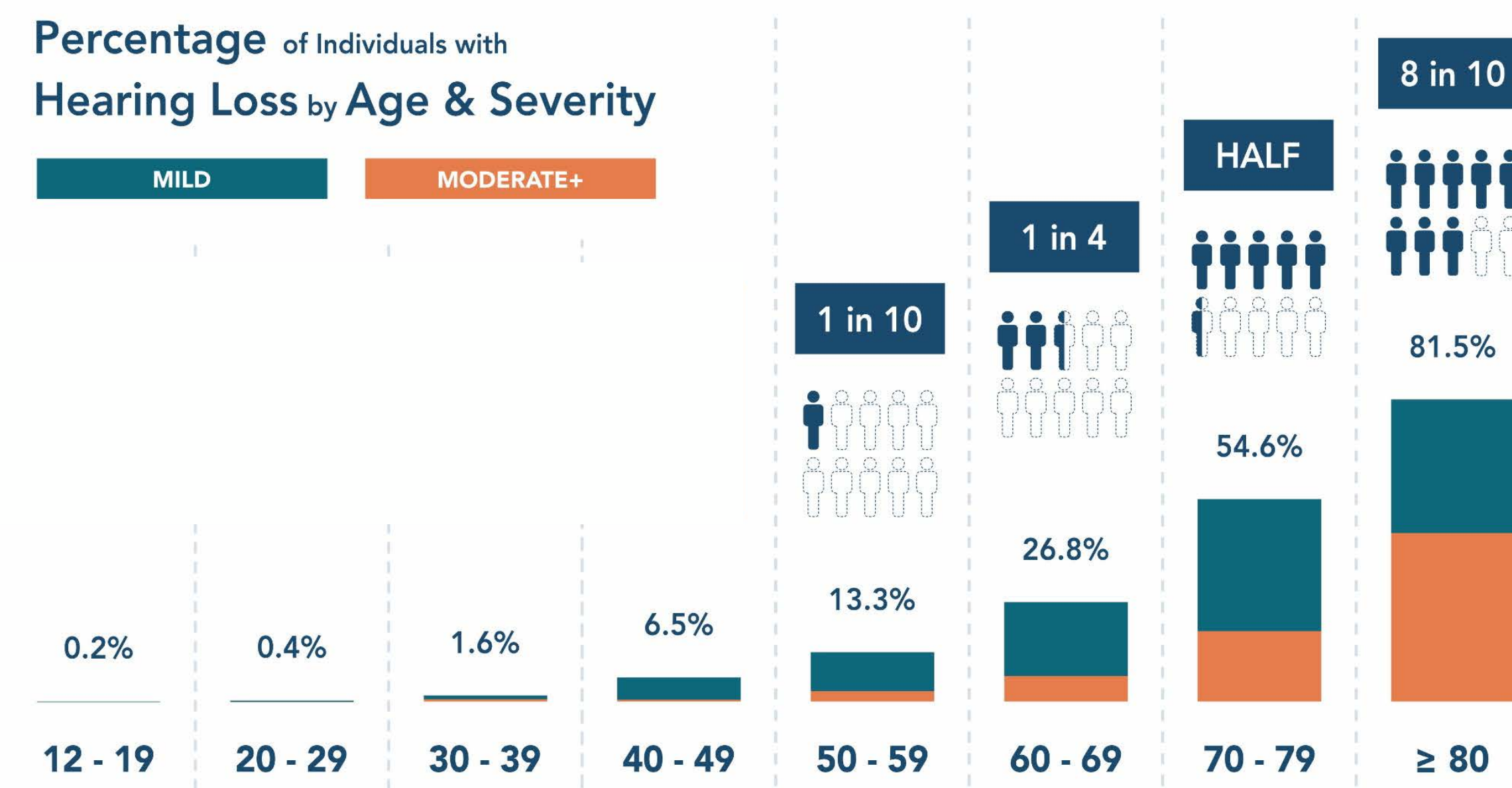
Cochlear Center for  
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Age-related hearing loss is almost universal and may impact how well we age.

Few older adults use hearing aids and significant disparities exist.

Partnering with community health workers may extend access & affordability.



Globally, over 1.5 billion individuals have hearing loss, a number expected to grow to 2.5 billion by 2050. The greatest burden is among older adults and in countries with low health care quality and access. Hearing loss is no longer considered a benign part of the aging process. Hearing loss has been independently associated with negative outcomes in almost every domain of aging, including dementia, falls, and depression.

While hearing care may be an essential tool to aging well, only 17% of individuals with hearing loss use hearing aids globally. In the U.S., 20% of older adults with hearing loss use hearing aids. Disparities exist based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic position, where only 10% of older racial and ethnic minorities use hearing aids. Multiple barriers contribute; some include cost, stigma, and inaccessible care.

Task sharing has been underutilized in hearing care. Based on a randomized controlled pilot, a 2-hour hearing care program utilizing over-the-counter hearing technology delivered entirely outside a clinic improves communication. Outcomes were comparable to hearing aids fit by an audiologist. Trained community health workers, including peer mentors, may be a powerful partner in extending hearing care.