



How does today's prevalence of hearing impairment among US teens compare to 50 years ago?

- a. Fewer youth with hearing impairment today
- b. Percent of hearing impairment is about the same
- c. More teens with hearing impairment today
- d. Unknown; there are no controlled studies for comparison

Answer:

The best answer is **a. fewer teens (i.e. lower percent) with hearing loss**. It may defy conventional wisdom, but researchers tracking hearing impairment via controlled national epidemiology studies find that prevalence of hearing loss among teens has **decreased** in recent years. National studies of young people (aged 12 years to 17-19 years) show that rates of hearing loss in both the speech range of hearing and high frequency hearing declined significantly between the 1960s and exams conducted 1988-1994. Better disease prevention and health care, as well as reductions in smoking, job-related noise, and use of firearms may be contributing factors. This is good news, indicating that better awareness and interventions have likely helped improve hearing outcomes.

The continuing challenge is that later studies conducted 2005-2010 **showed no additional decreases** in the prevalence of hearing impairment. So there is still work to be done! Developing healthy hearing habits at a young age is a worthy goal, since hearing impairment can be permanent and the effects may last a lifetime.

To help the young people in your life, check out these resources designed specifically for educating children and teens on the hazards of noise and the value of protecting hearing. Many guidelines, handouts, posters, and games are available for download at no charge (some in Spanish).

[Back to School - Educator Resources](#). CavCom *SoundBytes*.

For more information:

[Hoffman, Dobie, Losonczy, Themann & Flamme \(2018\)](#). Kids nowadays hear better than we did: declining prevalence of hearing loss in US youth, 1966-2010. *Laryngoscope*, 129(8): 1922-1939.

[Su and Chan \(2017\)](#). Prevalence of hearing loss in US children and adolescents. *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*, 143(9): 920-927.