

SUNspot – Wireless Users with Hearing Impairment

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We created “SUNspot” to share some of the latest findings of our ongoing Survey of User Needs (SUN), which we began in 2001. This survey is about the use and usability of wireless technology by people with disabilities. The data reported here were collected since we revised the SUN in May 2010.

This SUNspot addresses the following questions related to people with hearing impairment:

- *How many respondents who are deaf or hard of hearing have mobile wireless phones?*
- *How many are satisfied with the phone they have and their wireless service?*
- *How many use assistive technologies or third party software with their phones?*

Among 447 SUN respondents through January 2, 2011, 157 reported being deaf or hard of hearing. The data reported here represent preliminary results.* Data collection is ongoing.

Of these 157 survey respondents, 94% currently use wireless devices. These respondents reported generally high satisfaction and rates – 82% reported being either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with their devices, and 79% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their provider.

While 92% of these survey respondents said their devices were either easy or very easy to use, almost a third (31%) had added to or modified their devices in some way to make them easier to use: 27% of respondents added some sort of accessory, 20% added assistive technology, 14% added third-party software. Only 1% added some sort of improvised solution.

Survey of User Needs – 2010-2011: Summary results (see following tables for details)

Deaf and hard of hearing respondents that have a mobile wireless device	94%
How easy to use is your wireless device?	
- Easy or very easy (see details below)	92%
How satisfied are you with the device you use?	
- Somewhat satisfied or very satisfied (see details below)	82%
How satisfied are you with the service provider you use?	
- Somewhat satisfied or very satisfied (see details below)	79%
Have you added anything to your device to make it easier to use?	
- Yes* (includes accessories, assistive devices, software, and improvised solutions)	31%
- Accessories – (rubber skin, headset, other Bluetooth device, screen overlay, lanyard, stylus, etc.)	27%
- Assistive Devices – (headswitch, EMG switch, augmentative communication device, hearing aid, screen reader, screen magnifier, TTY, cochlear implant, etc.)*	20%
- Software - (3rd-party text-to-speech software, app store downloads, etc.)	14%
- Improvised solutions (handstrap, velcro, wheelchair mount, etc.)	1%

We share data like these with manufacturers and carriers, as well as with policymakers, for the purpose of improving usability of wireless technology. SUN data are regularly used in guiding industry and government initiatives. New SUN data are added every month, as the survey continues through the second quarter of 2011. We invite the public to take the Survey of User Needs and share how wireless technology affects daily life, and how it could be improved. The survey is available on paper, by phone (800-582-6360), or online at www.wirelessrerc.org/survey.

*Data source: Survey of User Needs (SUN), Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC). These data are based on a non-randomized population sample. The survey is promoted as broadly as possible through convenience sampling techniques, with special effort toward reaching under-represented groups. Sampling errors are corrected by weighting the response data according to 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) microdata on demographics of the U.S. population of people with disabilities. This helps to mitigate potential biases introduced by the convenience sampling approach. The data reported here are weighted by total household income, which is strongly correlated with education level in the ACS sample.

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