



SURVEY

How COVID-19 and Social Distancing Single Out the Hard of Hearing

An Online Survey of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Conducted During the first Phase of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic



Every single one of us has felt the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic in our day-to-day lives.

For many of us, it has fundamentally changed the way we live and work. We have learned to wear masks when going out of the house, social distance and use video conferencing to replace face-to-face communications. All of this has been challenging for many people and communities. But, the coronavirus pandemic poses added challenges for the 37 million Americans who experience hearing loss.

Social distancing guidelines and wearing masks in public can present particular challenges for the deaf and hard of hearing, many of whom read lips or use hearing aids to communicate. Everyday tasks and interactions are made more complicated during the global pandemic, bringing increased stress and anxiety.

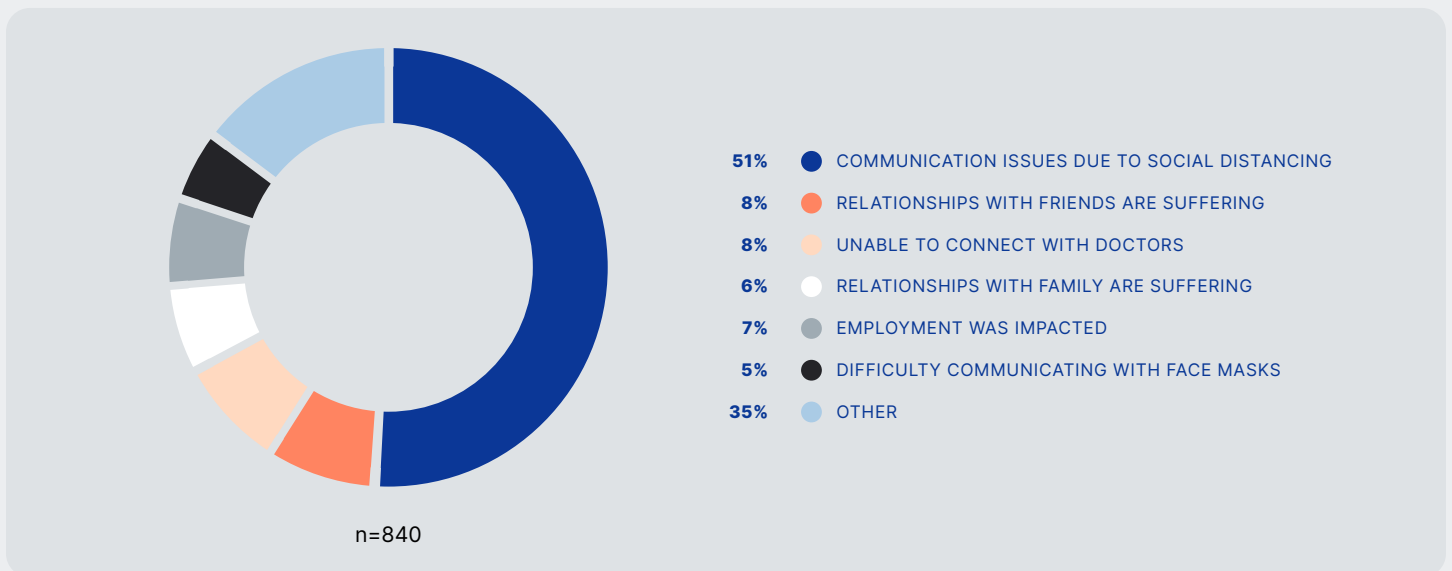
[InnoCaption](#), a mobile app-based provider of real-time captioning for phone calls, recently conducted a survey of this community to better understand how the pandemic has impacted their lives and how they communicate. The company surveyed more than 840 respondents online from May 22, 2020 to June 10, 2020 during the first difficult phase of the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, InnoCaption conducted a poll via its FaceBook page with regards to the impact of masks. The poll was conducted from June 30, 2020 to July 7, 2020 and surveyed 64 respondents.

The survey found that **51%** of the respondents indicated that the biggest obstacle they face during the current COVID-19 pandemic is communication difficulties due to social distancing. These include suffering relationships with friends and family, inability to communicate with doctors, impact on their work and difficulty communicating when wearing facemasks. In fact, an overwhelming majority, **95%** of respondents indicated that the use of masks significantly impacts their ability to successfully communicate with others.

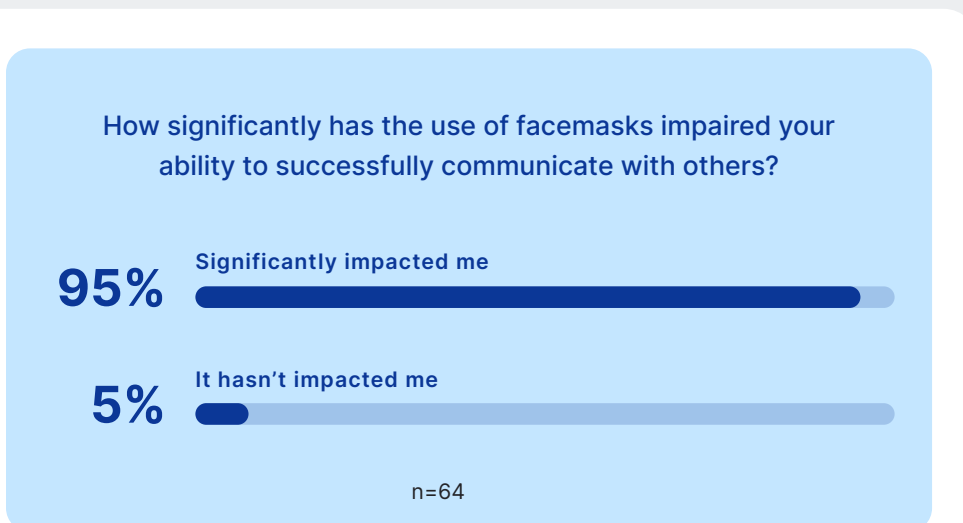

Additional results detailed further in this report shed light on difficulties encountered with social distancing, challenges with communications moving from face-to-face to virtual and access to healthcare.

Communicating during a time of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing is a major challenge for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

A majority, 51% of respondents indicated “communication issues due to social distancing” as the biggest challenge, other responses included strained communication with friends and family and difficulty connecting with doctors.



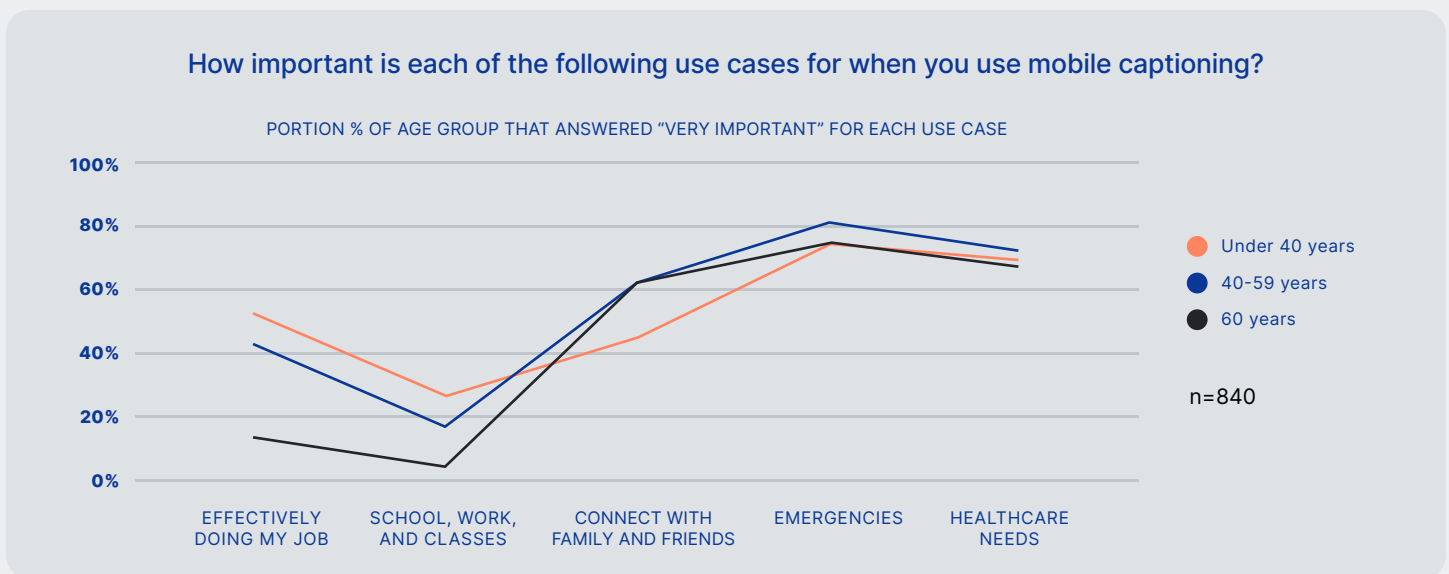
As a crosscheck to the core survey data, an overwhelming majority, 95% of respondents in our Facebook survey, indicated that the use of masks significantly impacts their ability to successfully communicate with others.

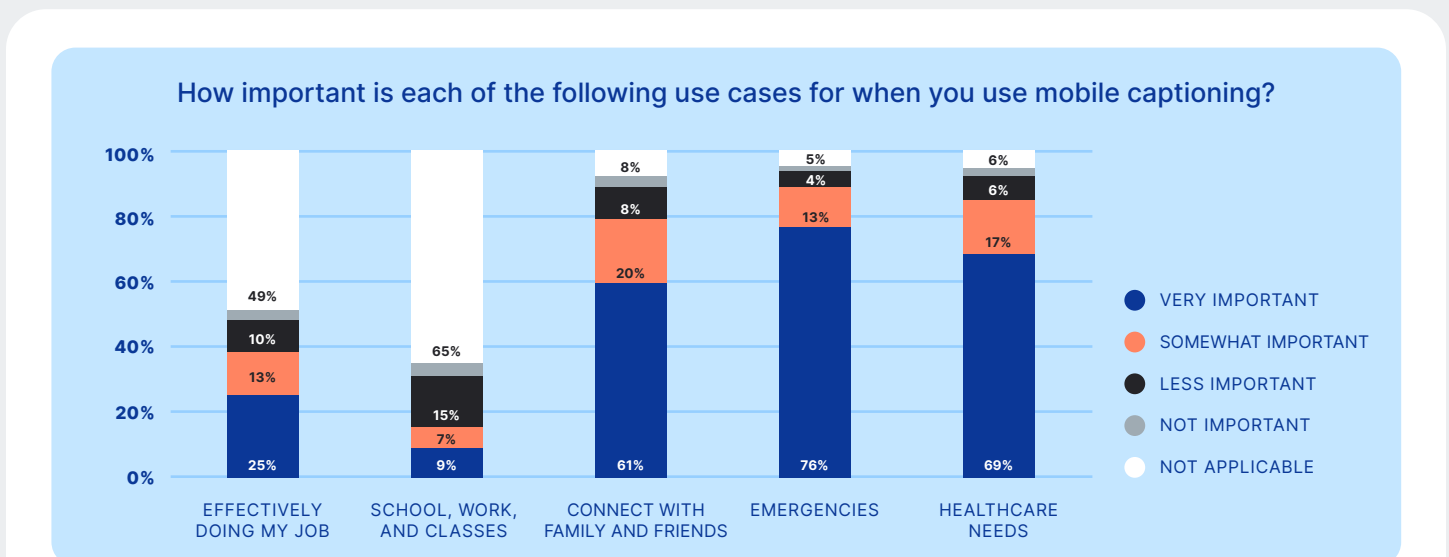
“I’m unable to see people’s lips when they talk on the phone so I don’t know what they are saying. Using captioning, I can follow a conversation with friends, family, doctors and other health professionals also.”

Captions play a significant role in communications among all demographics of the deaf and hard of hearing during the pandemic. As shown in the chart below, the importance of mobile captions for emergencies and healthcare needs was consistently high across all age groups.

Not surprisingly, the importance of mobile captioning for work and school/classes was high for younger age groups and decreased with older age. The importance for connecting with family and friends was consistent across age groups 40 and up, whereas below 40 the importance saw a drop – likely as younger users use other means (text and social media; outside of phone calls) more often to stay connected.

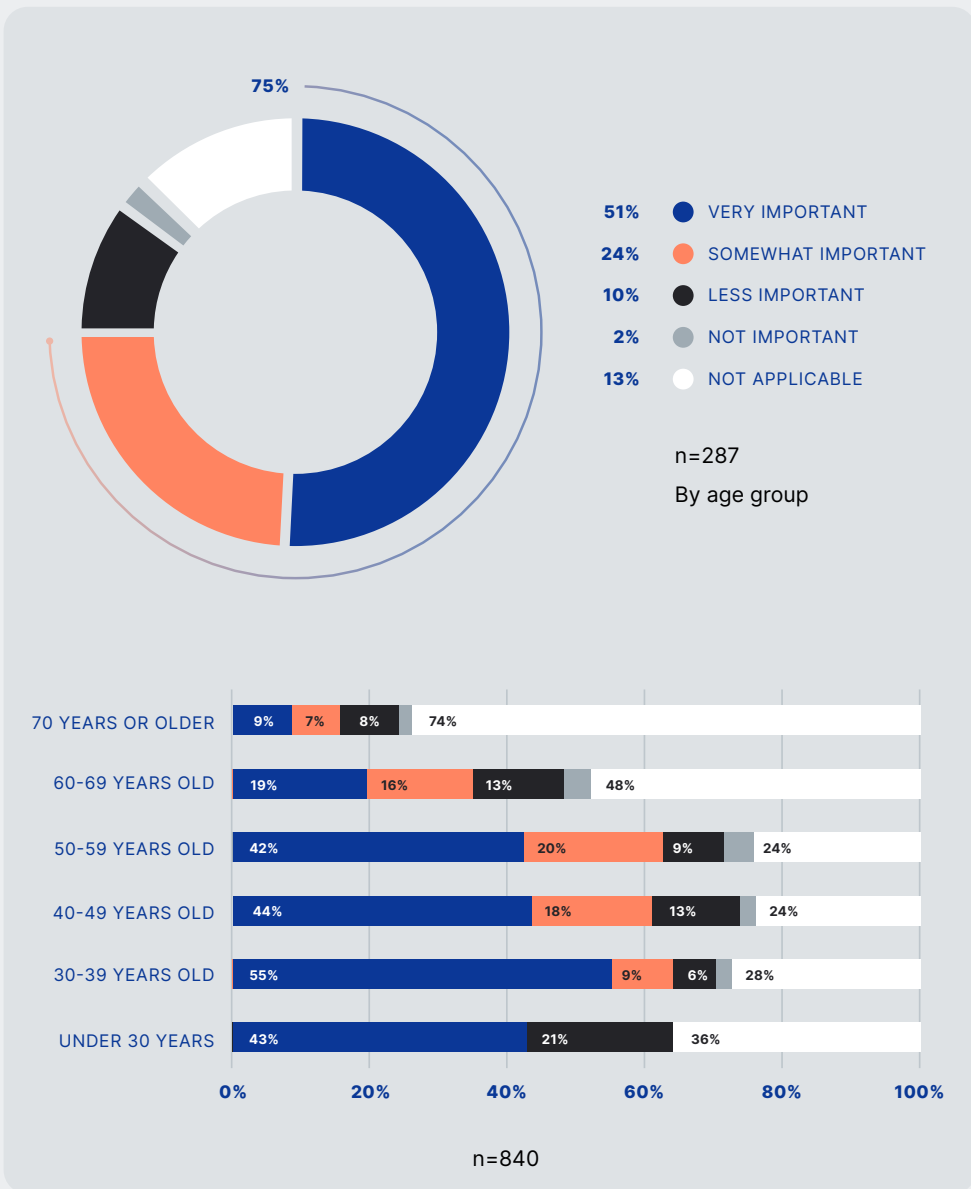


Overall, a majority of those over 40 cited healthcare and emergency services as the most important use of mobile captioning during the pandemic, while those under 40 cited the importance of effectively doing their job, or participating in school activities and classes.



Those in their prime working years, 64% of 30-39 year olds, 62% of 40-49 year olds and 62% of 50-59 year olds in the survey, said that mobile captioning is very, or at least somewhat important to effectively doing their jobs. In fact, of the total population of respondents, excluding those who are unemployed, an overwhelming 3 out of 4 indicated that mobile captioning is somewhat or very important to their work.

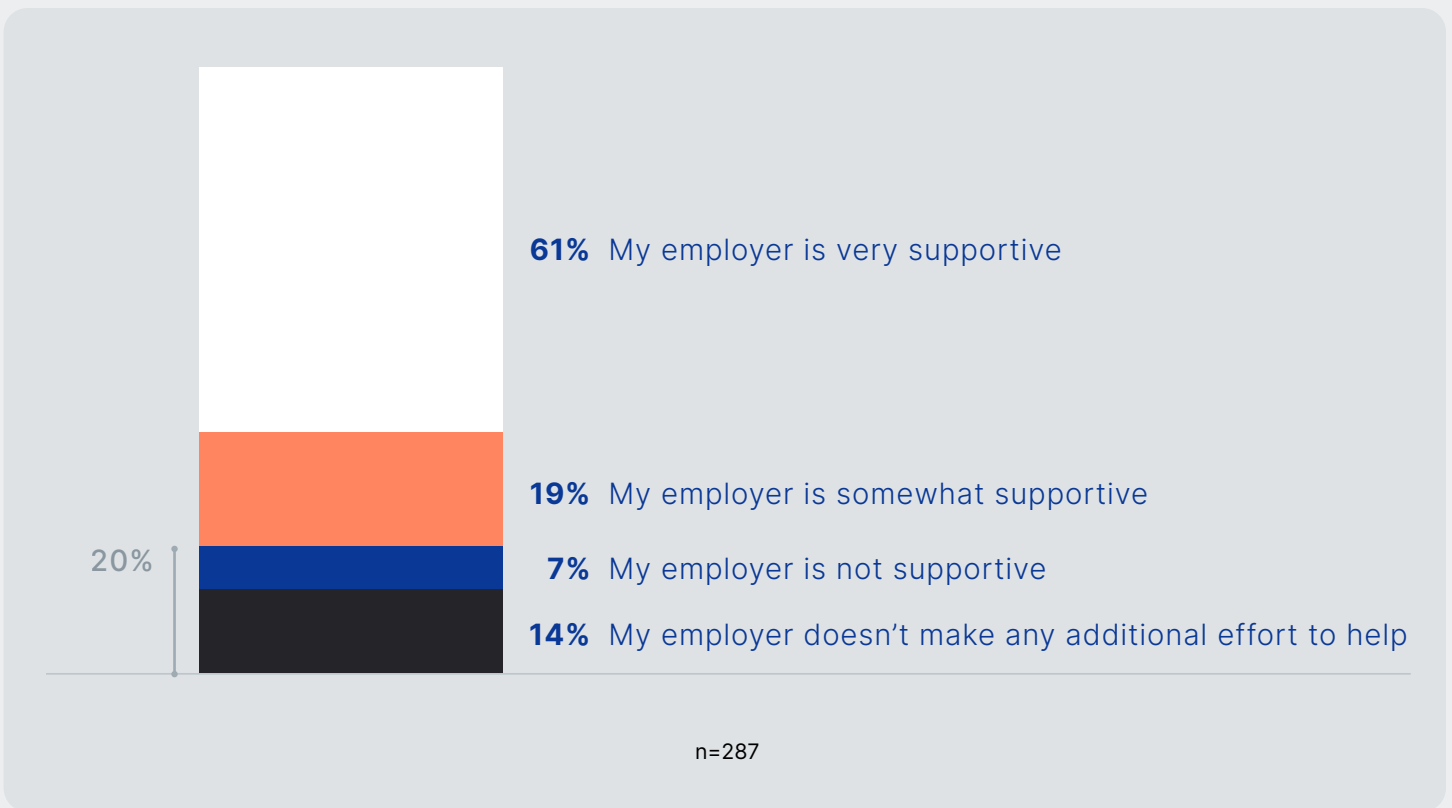
How important is each of the following use cases for when you use mobile captioning?



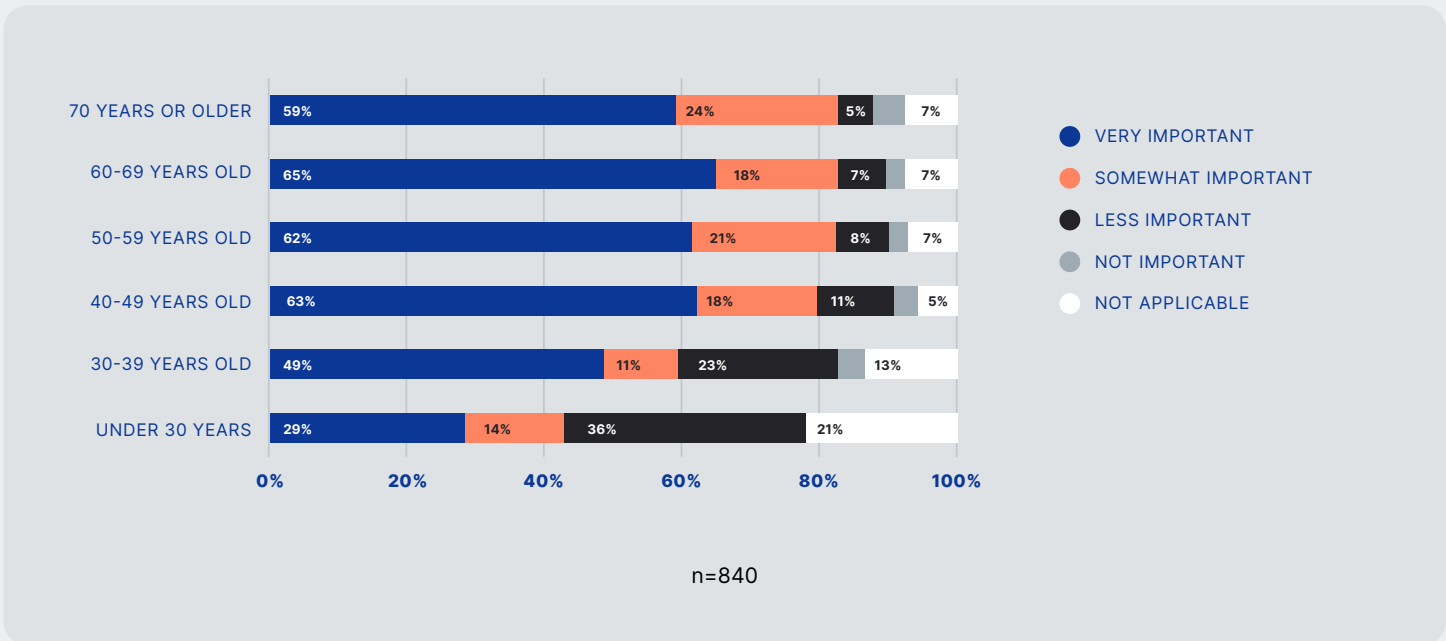
"I'm not great on the phone, and it's hard to make appointments or communicate with potential employers who prefer calling over email."

Amongst respondents who indicated they were currently employed, 80% indicated their employer was supportive of remote work, but a significant 20% of deaf and hard of hearing individuals indicated that the support they needed during the pandemic was lacking.

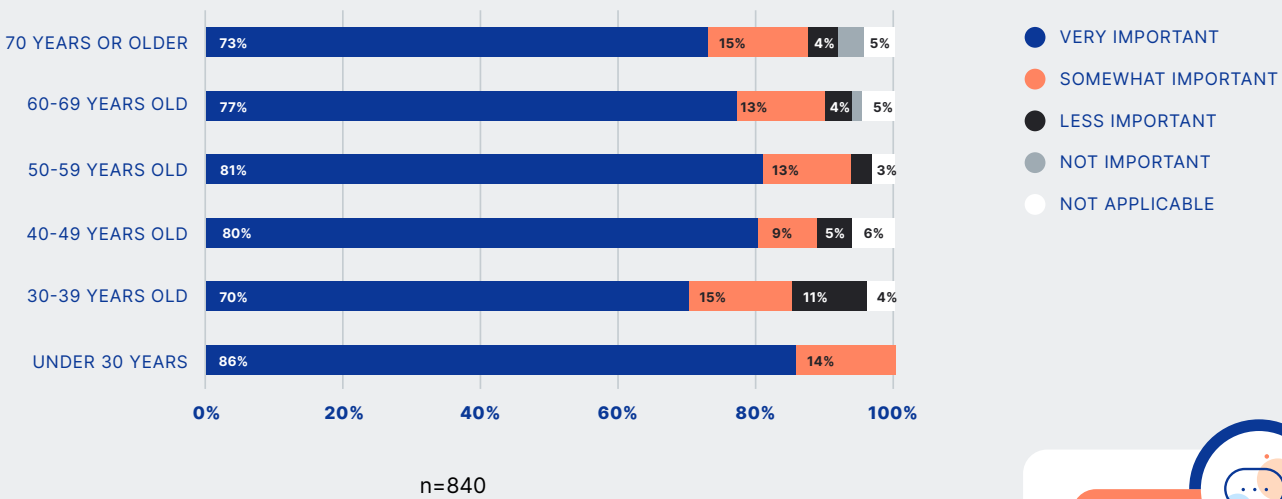
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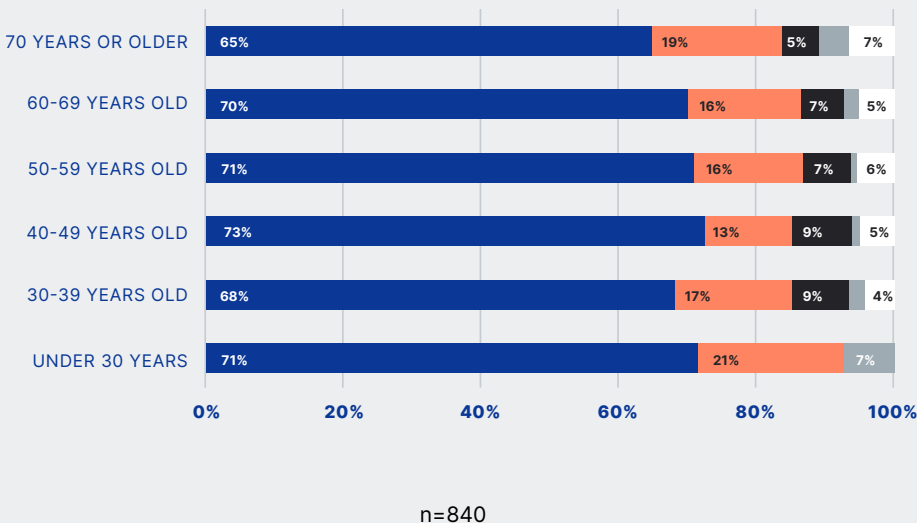

Outside of work, across all age groups 40 and older, at least 80% of respondents indicated that mobile captioning was important for keeping in touch with friends and family. In general, 3 out of 4 respondents relied on mobile captioning to stay connected with friends and family during the pandemic. That number dropped to a little more than half for 30-39 year olds and 1 out of 3 for the younger population under 30, who may not rely as much on phone calls to communicate.



Where respondents rely on mobile captioning the most is during emergencies. An overwhelming majority, more than 80% across all age groups, said that mobile captioning is very or somewhat important for communicating during an emergency. As healthcare needs dramatically accelerated because of the pandemic, especially for an older population, mobile captioning has become a communication tool that the deaf and hard of hearing have come to rely on.



Similar numbers hold true for general healthcare needs during the pandemic.

“No one wants to call 911, but in an emergency situation mobile captioning is very helpful over text messaging, as you can actually speak with an operator and they will help connect with dispatch, so your emergency is communicated.”

Methodology

As our world makes permanent shifts in how we work and interact with one another, the deaf and hard of hearing community faces an ongoing battle of new challenges to overcome. InnoCaption surveyed 840 of its users, all of whom must be a registered user with hearing loss by federal law. The survey was conducted over the course of five weeks via email to those in the deaf and hard of hearing community to learn how they have been coping with COVID-19 and the new challenges that have arisen as a result of social distancing. Additionally, InnoCaption conducted a poll via its Facebook page with regards to the impact of masks. The poll was conducted over the course of seven days and surveyed 64 respondents. The use of technology and Artificial Intelligence is working to help bridge this gap.

Learn more at

innocaption.com