



# Deaf Culture

## What is Culture?

*When people share a similar set of values, norms, a history, and tradition, coupled with a common language, these people constitute a culture.*

### Is there a Deaf Culture?

*Yes, American Sign Language unites people with profound hearing loss throughout the United States. Communities of Deaf people have educational institutions, social clubs, and athletic organizations. Diverse events, conferences, and conventions of all sizes take place on a regular basis, affording the culturally deaf individual a wide array of options.*

### Is American Sign Language (ASL) an official language?

*Yes, it is a visual language that is natural and complete, and is independent from written or spoken English. As with any living language, ASL continue to evolve over the years. The U.S. Census lists ASL as the third most widely used language in the country.*

## The Deaf Community

*The cultural experience of the Deaf community has flourished in the arts. There is a growing body of ASL poetry and there are humorous tales handed down through generations of Deaf people. Deaf people have a shared heritage and are fond of the history and folklore associated with famous Deaf individuals*

### Who belongs?

*Those who sign and can understand others' social, emotional, cultural, and educational needs. This also includes Hard of Hearing individuals, family members of Deaf individuals, and professionals who work with Deaf individuals (teachers, interpreters, etc.), although none of them might feel a cultural identity.*

### How can you tell? Are there unique clothing or food?

*Members communicate primarily in ASL and may exhibit a close-knit relationship, creating signs for each other's names, for example. Other than that, they are also members of other racial, ethnic, and religious groups that have a vibrant culture of their own.*

## CONTACT US FOR AWARENESS TRAINING

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## Statistics

### How many persons in the United States are Deaf or Hard of Hearing?

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations estimates here are given by the National Center for Health Statistics of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. According to their 1990 and 1991 Health Interview Surveys: Approximately 20 million persons, or 8.6% of the total U.S. population aged 3 years and older, were reported to have hearing problems.

*Table 1. Estimate of the Prevalence of Hearing Impairments by Age Group, United States, 1990-91.*

Age Group	Population	Number of Hearing Impaired	Percent of Population
TOTAL	235,688,000	20,295,000	8.6%
3-17	53,327,000	968,000	1.8%
18-34	67,414,000	2,309,000	3.4%
35-44	38,019,000	2,380,000	6.3%
45-54	25,668,000	2,634,000	10.3%
55-64	21,217,000	3,275,000	15.4%
65 and older	30,043,000	8,729,000	29.1%

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Data from the National Health Interview Survey, Series 10, Number 188, Table 1, 1994.

*Table 2. Estimate of the Prevalence of Deafness, by Three Possible Descriptions, United States, 1990-91.*

Description	Estimated Number	Percent of Population
Deaf, both ears	421,000	0.18%
Cannot hear & understand any speech	552,000	0.23%
At best, can hear & understand words shouted in the better ear	1,152,000	0.49%

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Data from the National Health Interview Survey, Series 10, Number 188, Table 1, B, C, 1994.

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