

# Attitudes towards hearing healthcare, hearing aids and “hearables” amongst adults over 50 years.



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## BACKGROUND

- Untreated hearing loss is an issue of growing importance; by 2031, there will be 15.6 million people with hearing loss in the UK.
- 40% of people over 50 years old have hearing loss (RNID, 2020)
- Currently, only 40% of those who could benefit from hearing aids have them, and 20% of those do not use them.
- Reasons for low uptake include stigmatization, low trust in hearing aid benefit, cognitive restrictions, and cost, amongst others (Meister, et al., 2008)
- The growing number of adults in the UK with untreated hearing loss has consequences beyond that of communication difficulties, such as social isolation and negative effects on mental health, education and employment. (Saito et al., 2010; Acar et al., 2011, RNID, 2013)

## AIMS

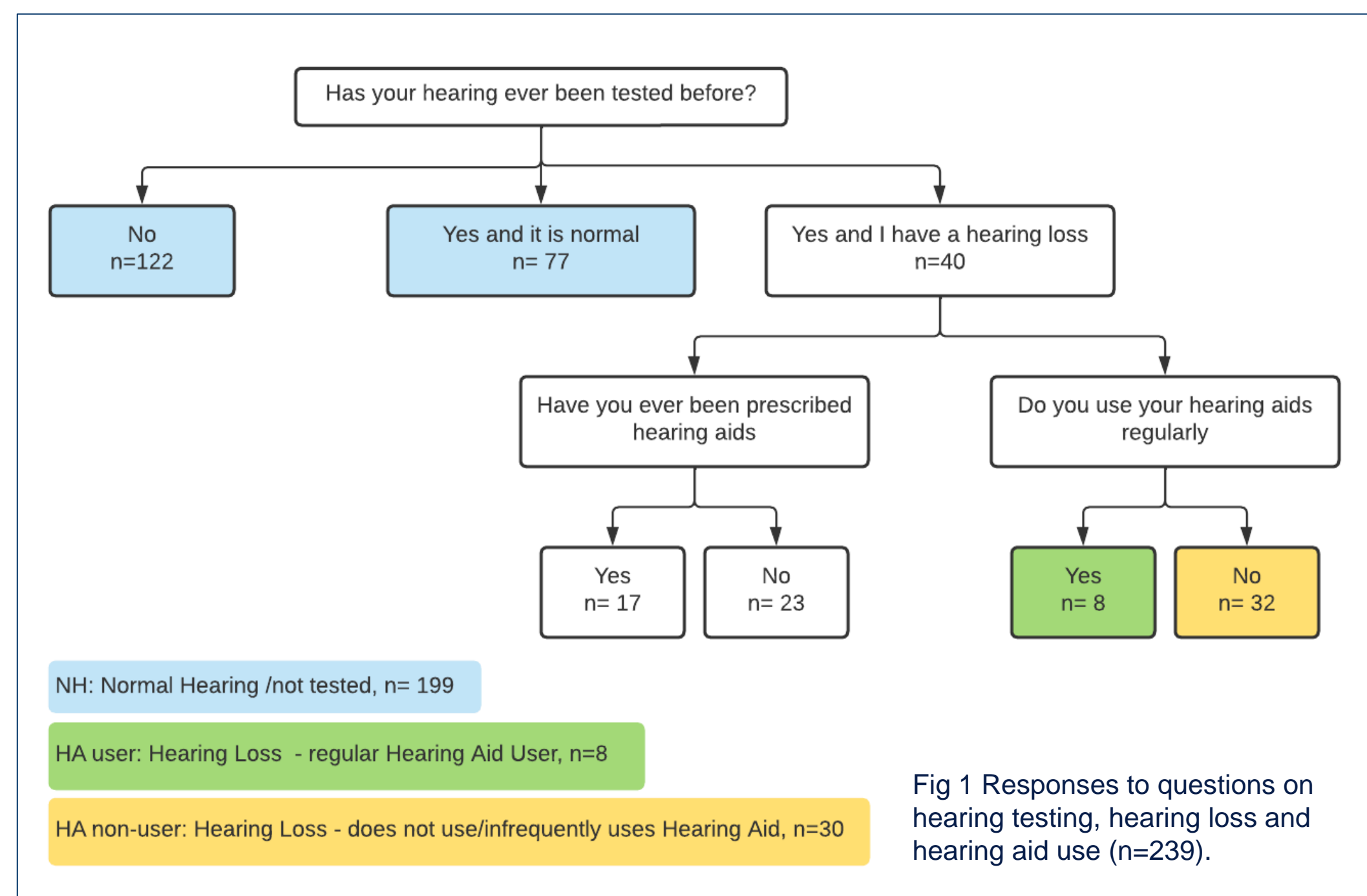
To explore (1) perceived attractiveness of hearing aid and hearable technologies and (2) willingness to use hearing aid vs hearable technologies.

## METHODS

An online survey of UK adults (N=239) was conducted using the Prolific platform, with a filter set to recruit only participants over 50 years. Participants answered questions on their hearing status, experiences with hearing healthcare & technologies. They were asked about their attitudes towards hearing healthcare and hearing technologies before and after viewing images of hearing aids & hearables, and asked to rate their willingness to use these technologies.

## RESULTS

- 55% of respondents were 50-59 yrs, 38% 60-69 yrs and 7% were 70+ yrs.
- 67% - Female, 33% male.
- The majority of respondents, 51%, had never received a hearing test.
- Of those who had received a hearing test, 66% reported having normal hearing and 34% had a hearing loss (with <1% regularly using hearing aids) (fig. 1).
- Free text responses to questions on the reasons for non-use showed varied factors including cost, association with ageing and limit impact on daily activities (fig. 2).



“I'm worried that using hearing aids will make me feel old. Also they are quite expensive.”

“uncomfortable, impractical (fall out), and I think a little bit of denial!”

“I'm OK provided I can see others speak and provided there's no loud background noise - when it gets to be a significant problem, I'll look to get an aid”

Fig 2 Comments from adults with hearing loss on their reasons for declining hearing aids.

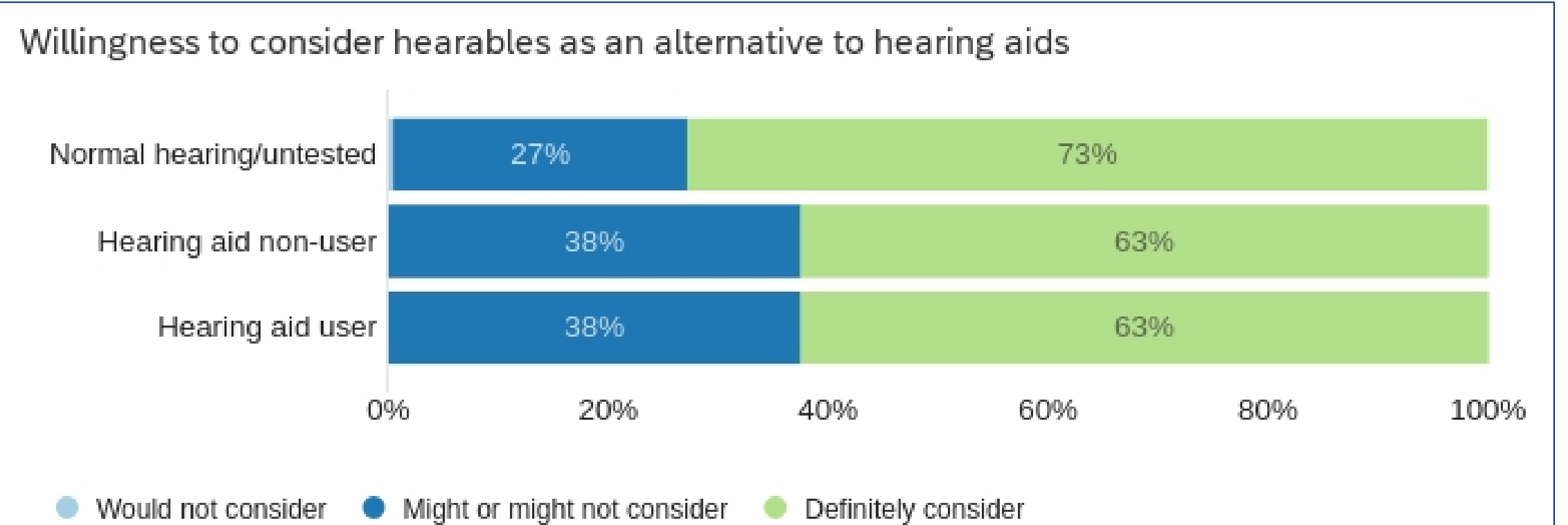
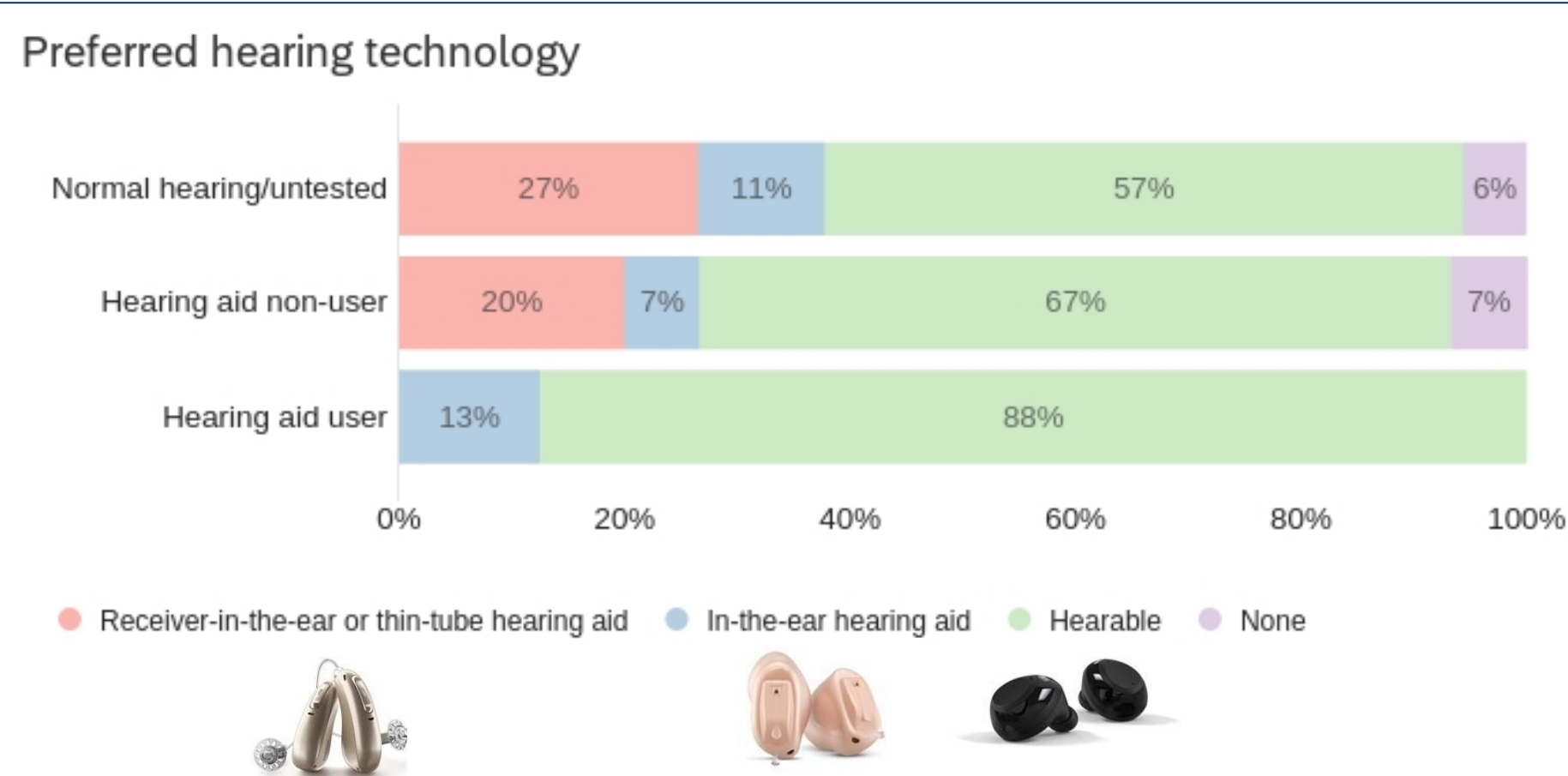


Fig 3 Preferred hearing technologies selected by respondents with normal hearing (or untested), hearing loss but not using hearing aids regularly and those using hearing aids regularly.

Fig 4 Willingness to consider hearables as an alternative to hearing aids amongst respondents with normal hearing (or untested), hearing loss but not using hearing aids regularly and those using hearing aids regularly.

- 55% of respondents reported already using wireless earphones or headphones for audio streaming.
- After viewing images of hearing aids and hearables, 57% of those with normal hearing, 67% of those with hearing loss but not currently using hearing aids and 88% of those using hearing aids selected hearables as the hearing device they preferred to use (fig. 3).
- Attitudes towards hearing healthcare tended to be less positive amongst adults with hearing loss that were currently not using hearing aids than in those untested or with normal hearing (fig. 5).

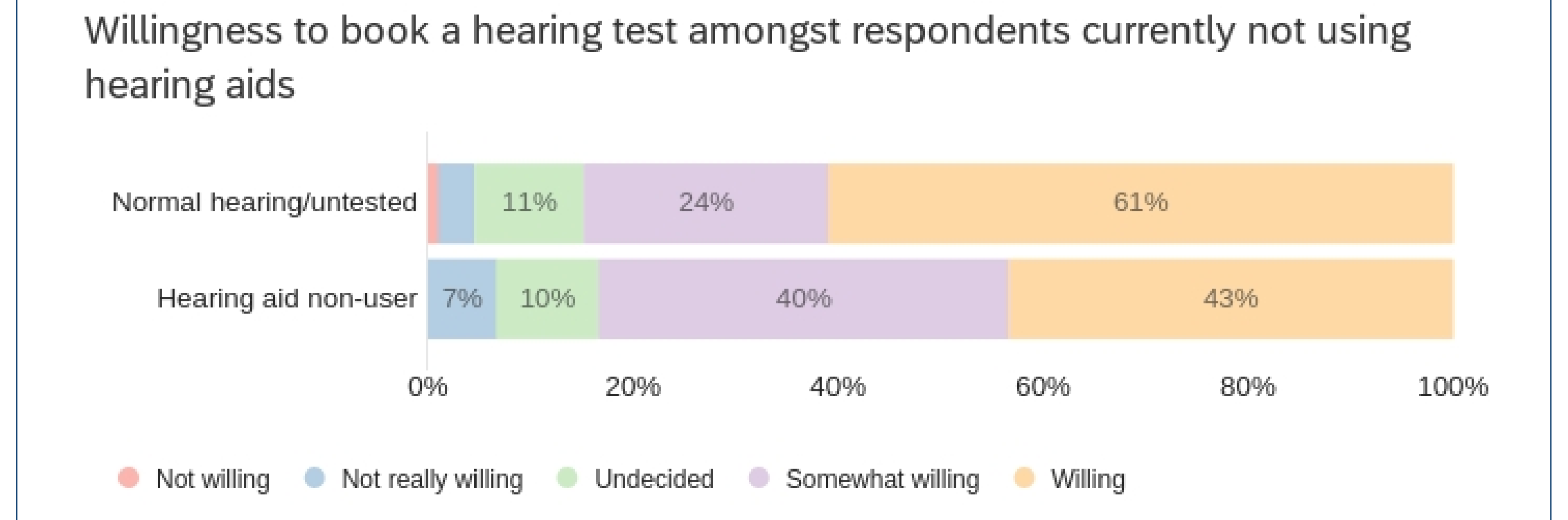


Fig 5 Willingness to book a hearing test in respondents with normal hearing (or untested) and respondents with hearing loss currently not using hearing aids regularly.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the high prevalence of hearing loss in adults over 50 years, a smaller proportion of respondents reported having a hearing loss.

The results indicate that adults at risk of hearing loss may be more willing to consider hearing technologies in a hearable format (fig. 4) and that willingness to consider or recommend hearing healthcare tended to be lower in adults with hearing loss.

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