

Research Summary

Addressing Hearing Aid Sound Preference Improves Conversion

BACKGROUND

Individual preferences for different hearing aid sound designs are real and measurable, with approximately 40% of listeners having a clear preference across several large studies (Balling et al., 2026; Marmel et al. 2026). If a hearing aid candidate gets fitted with hearing aids that align with their sound preference, they may be more likely to purchase and wear hearing aids.

STUDIES

Two studies examined whether systematically addressing sound preference during hearing aid consultations improves hearing aid adoption. Positive effects may arise due to a better match between the client's preference and the hearing aid they are fitted with, or because addressing sound preference increases the engagement of the client in their treatment.

Clients explored their sound preference between two different hearing aid sound designs in an online listening tool. The result informed a clinical discussion of listening experiences, listening needs, and hearing aid choice. Preference was one input to the recommendation, alongside clinical judgement and practical needs.

A structured sound preference approach can support shared decision making and personalized hearing aid selection and may give clients greater ownership of the solution.

Study question

Does addressing sound preference improve hearing aid uptake?

METHOD

Clinical setting

42 hearing care clinics across Spain, US and Canada.

Participants

> 3000 clients across three countries.

Duration

Three to four months in 2026.

Approach

Clients exploring their sound preference through a listening tool comparing two different sound designs, followed by a clinical discussion. Hearing aid recommendation based on preference and clinical evaluation.

Outcome

Conversion to hearing aids, comparing clients experiencing the Sound Preference Approach with those who did not.

RESULTS

Higher conversion with Sound Preference Approach

+5pp

average increase in
conversion across studies

+4.3pp

(n = 1,616)

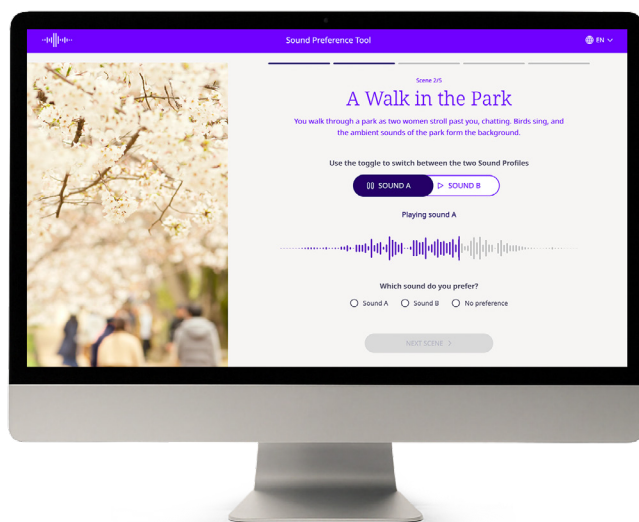


+5.8pp

(n = 1,598)



- Comparing conversion between clients who experienced the Sound Preference Approach (n = 1,484) and clients who did not (n = 1,730).
- Difference is highly significant ($\chi^2 = 7.877$, $p = 0.005$).
- Sample includes both new and experienced hearing aid users.
- Sound Preference Tool used prior to or during clinical appointment, sound preference conversation integrated part of clinical discussion.
- More detail in Balling, Rubio Roldán & Navarrete Salmerón (2026).



CLINICAL OPPORTUNITY

Using the Sound Preference Tool as the basis for a structured preference conversation can make hearing aid selection more personalized, increase client involvement, and improve the likelihood that clients proceed with and keep their hearing aids.

References:

Balling, L.W., Jensen, N.S., Nielsen, M., Best, S., Lelic, D., Marmel, F. & Engelund, G. (2026). Sound preference as a measurable dimension in hearing aid fitting: Evidence from comparisons of time-domain and frequency-domain processing. *WSA White Paper*.

Balling, Rubio Roldán & Navarrete Salmerón (2026). Addressing Hearing Aid Sound Preference Improves Clinical Outcomes. *WSA White Paper*.

Marmel, F., Balling, L.W. & Rønne, F. (2026). Comparing time-domain and frequency-domain processing: Preference across platforms. *WSA White Paper*.