



Health Information Seeking Behavior of Individuals with Hearing Loss in an Online Community

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Introduction

- Health information sharing in online communities is important for disabled groups.
- Few studies addressed people with hearing loss, which affects 7.6 million people in the United States and 15-26% of the world's population.
- Heavily usage of online communities is due to difficulty to communicate with hearing world effectively.

Research Questions

- RQ 1. What types of **health concerns** do people with hearing loss express in online communities?
- RQ 2. What types of **health information** do people with hearing loss seek in online communities?
- RQ 3. What types of **information sources** do people with hearing loss seek in online communities?

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection: 559 health questions out of 1,835 health-related threads in the forum, *Lifestyle, Health, Fitness & Food*, in AllDeaf, a leading online community for them.

Health Concerns Analysis: 16 categories suggested by MedlinePlus.

Information Types: factual information, opinions or evaluations, procedural information (Savolainen, 2011a, 2011b).

Information Sources: personal knowledge or experience, expert or expert organization, human sources, networked sources, printed sources, and other sources (Savolainen, 2011a).

Health Concerns

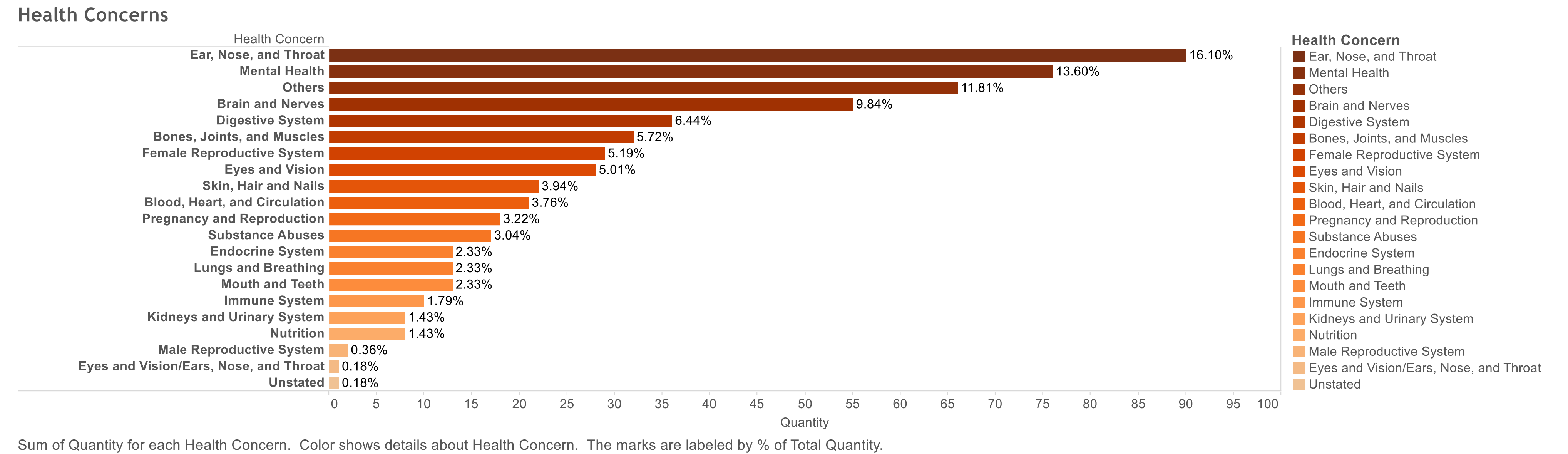


Fig. Distribution of Health Concerns

- Ear problems: hearing loss, tinnitus, ear infections, and ear pain with or without hearing aids.
- Mental health: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mood swings.
- Others: hospital service, health insurance, and doctors.

Information Types and Information Sources

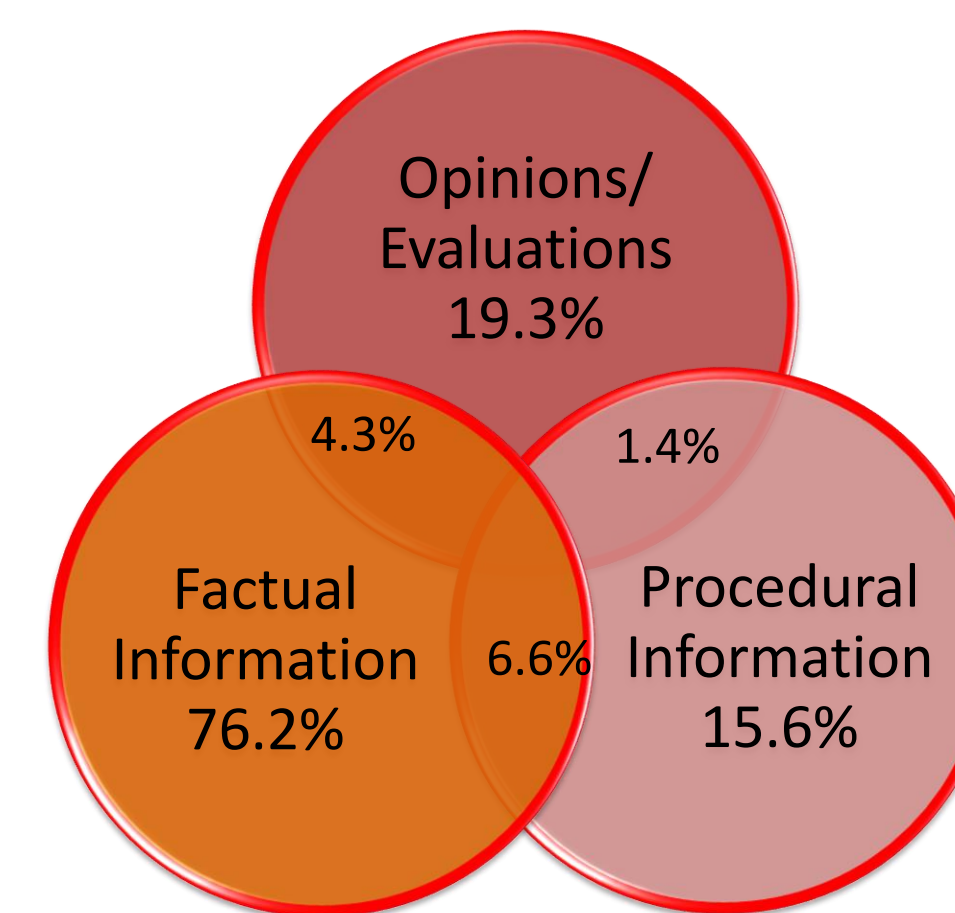


Fig. Distribution of Information Types

- Factual information and personal knowledge are mostly inquired.
- Some questions include multiple information types.

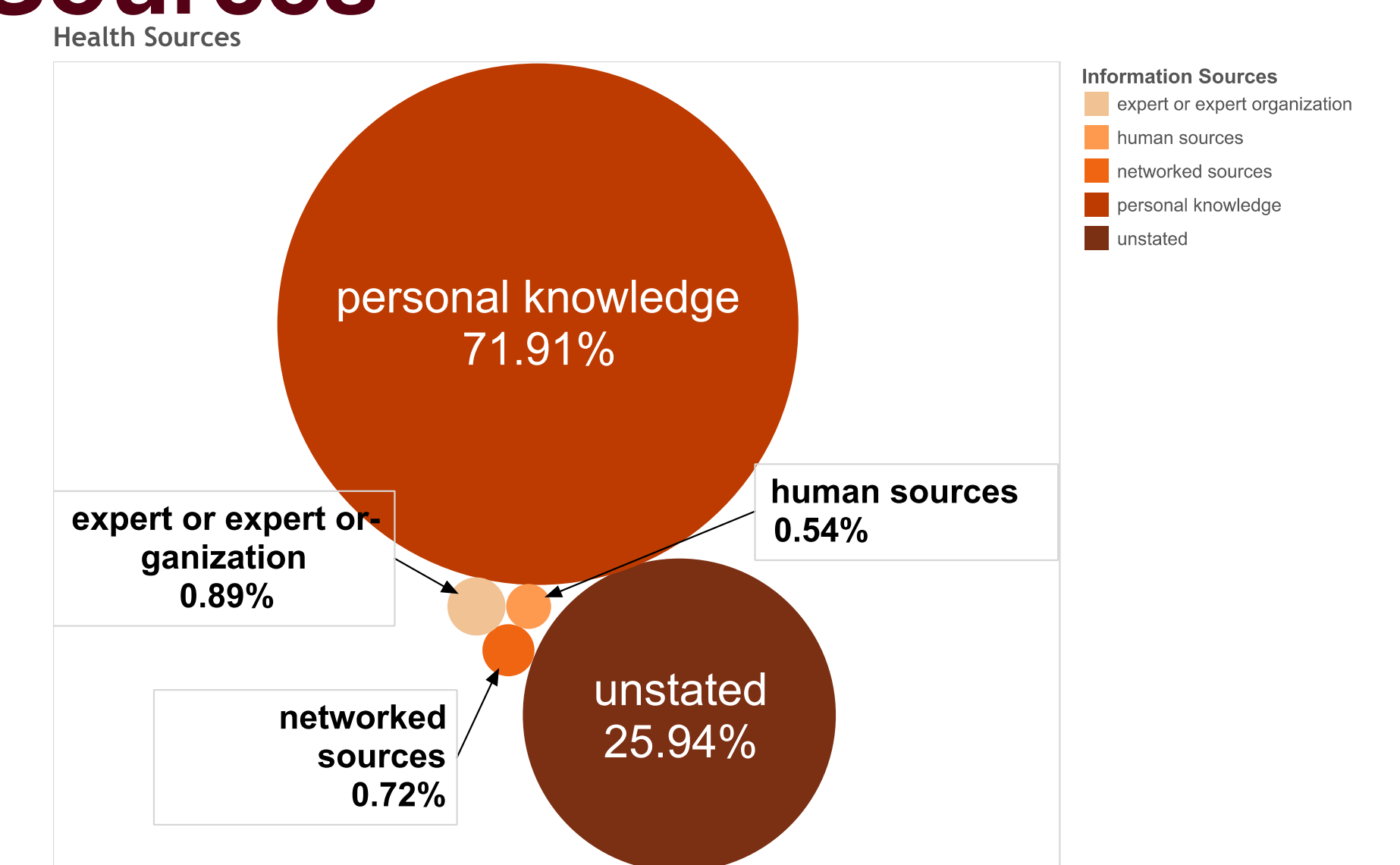


Fig. Distribution of Information Sources

Conclusions and Future Work

- Hearing loss correlates with ear and mental illnesses.
- Personal experiences are mostly inquired.
- In the future, investigate the influence of culture preferences on health information sharing.

Implications

- For health care, provide more information related to ear and mental illnesses.
- Health education needs to incorporate personal experiences in the materials.