ARO
Association for Research in Otolaryngology

ARO 49th MidWinter Meeting

PUERTO RICO CONVENTION CENTER
FEBRUARY 7-11, 2026

Executive Summary



SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

aro.org



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Midwinter Meeting HIGHLIGHTS



CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Meeting Attendance

1503 Attendees
30 Countries

Highest Attended Sessions

Presidential Symposium - Part 1 – 465

Podium 6: OTOF Gene Therapy Trial Updates and New Targets: GJB2 & STRC - 439

Young Investigator Symposium 1: Real-World Acoustic Environments and Their Impact on Hearing and Well-Being - 436

Percentages below do not include those who indicated they did not attend the session

87.1% Respondents liked the Presedential Symposium.

86.4% Respondents liked the relatively new Mini-Podium format.

81.3% Respondents liked the new Late-Breaking Podium session format.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Science of the Meeting Evaluation

Attendees were given the opportunity to complete a post-meeting survey, which yielded the following conclusions regarding educational value, quality of content, and speakers. There were 613 respondents to the evaluation resulting in a response rate of 40.92%. Of those that responded to the meeting evaluation, 88.58% were current ARO members.

Respondent Break Down

2023 Total Respondents = 655 (37.3% of all attendees responded to the evaluation).

2024 Total Respondents = 574 (33.2% of all attendees responded to the evaluation).

2024 Location Only Total Respondents = 181 (7.6% of all non-attendees responded to the Location Only survey.)

2025 Total Respondents = 435 (26.9% of all attendees responded to the evaluation).

2026 Total Respondents = 613 (40.78% of all attendees responded to the evaluation).

Attendance by Country: Top 5 countries:

- United States - 1060
- Germany - 69
- Japan - 55
- United Kingdom - 44
- France - 38

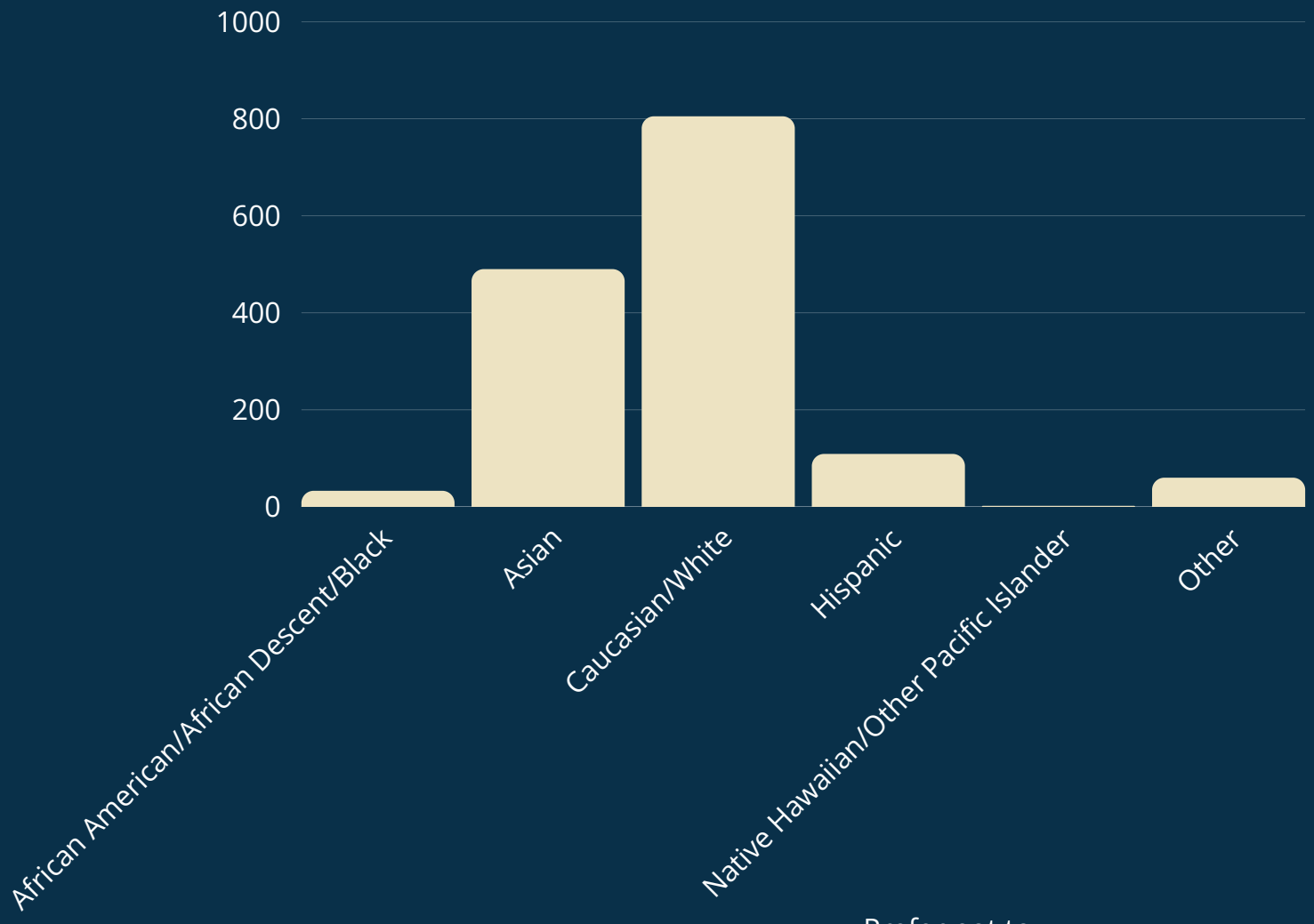
Attendee BREAKDOWN



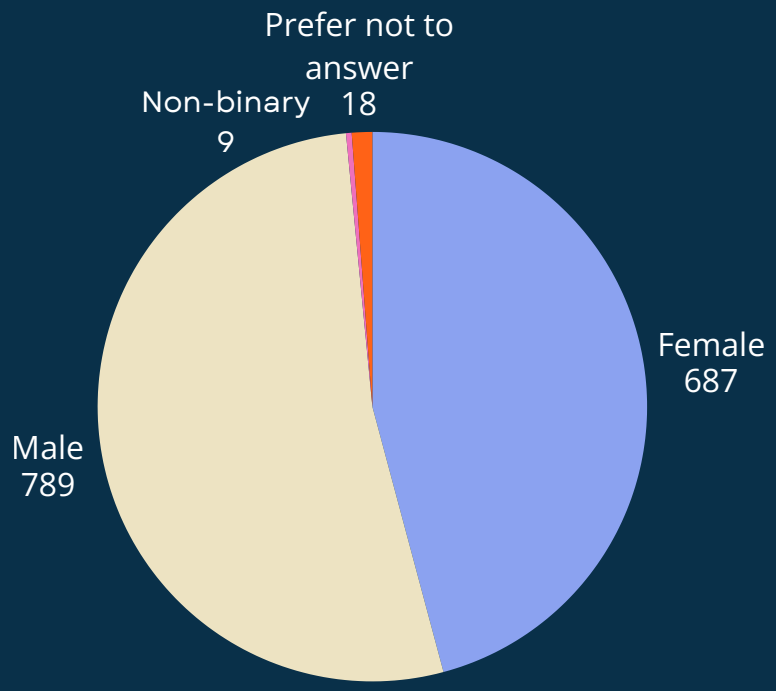
BREAKDOWN BY TYPE

Registration Category	2024	2025	2026
Total Registrants	1731	1616	1503
Member	750	704	663
Student Member	648	610	537
Non-Member	178	162	170
Student Non-Member	109	85	95
Main Session Recordings	21	25	23
Senior Registration	25	17	15

Breakdown by Ethnicity/Race

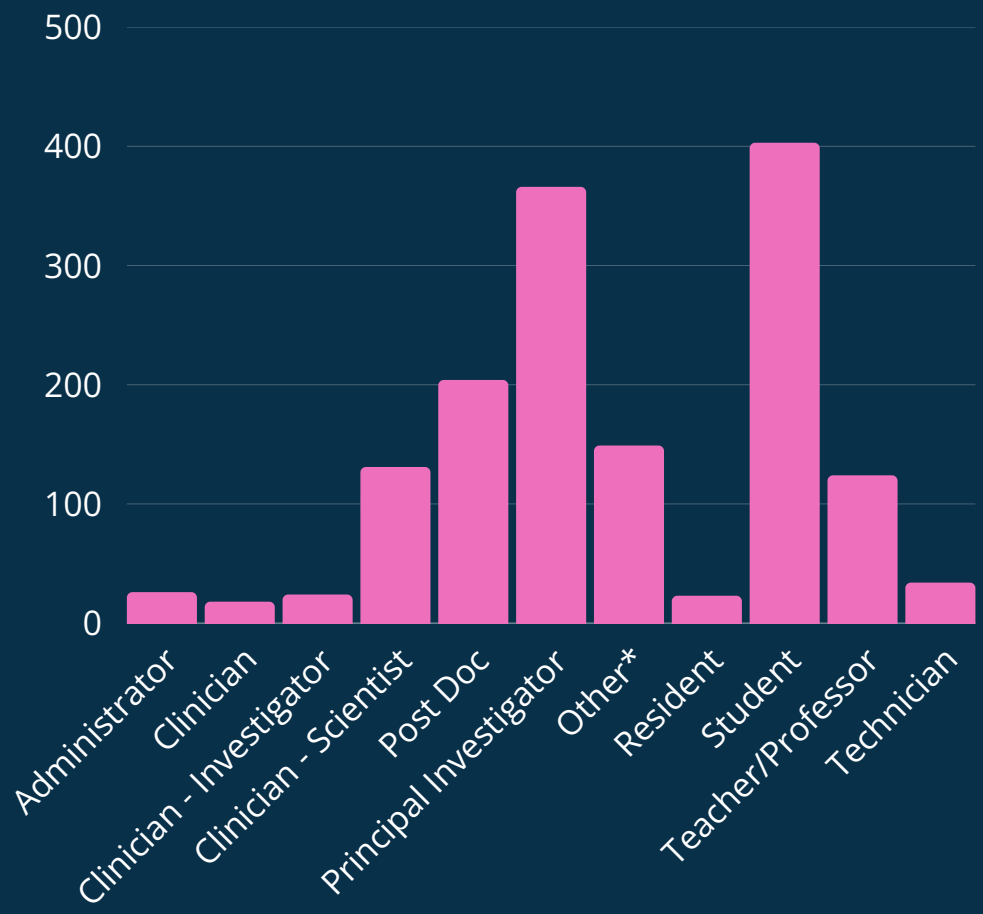


Breakdown by Gender

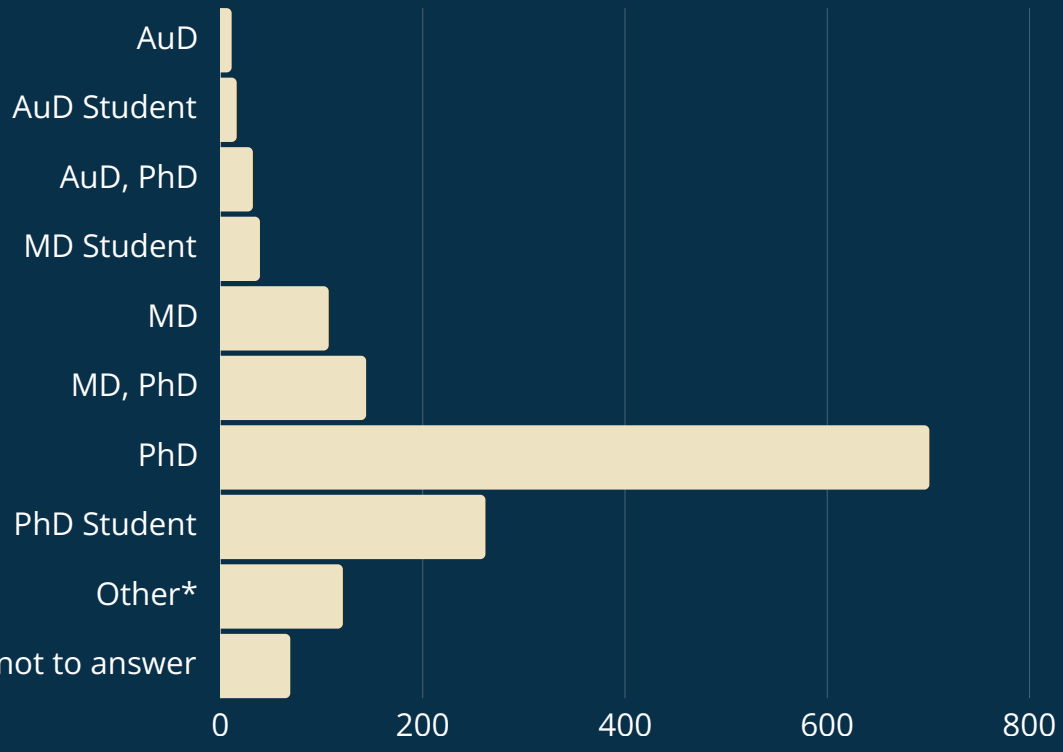


Breakdown by Career Level

*Other:



Breakdown by Degree



*Other: None, or prefer not to answer

Breakdown by Areas of Interest

	2026
Auditory (CNS)	516
Auditory (Inner Ear/Neural)	847
Auditory (Outer/Middle Ear)	272
Auditory Neuroscience	860
Biochemistry	126
Chemical Senses (Smell/Taste)	24
Developmental Biology	272
Genetics	372
Hair Cells	560
Immunology	137
Implantable Prostheses	230
Laryngology	31
Otology / Neurotology	350
Pathology	152
Pharmacology	153
Psychophysics	228
Regeneration	285
Speech/ Voice	177
Vestibular	301
Gene Therapy	377
Multisensory processing/interactions	215
Other*	52

Previous ARO Meetings:

How many ARO Meetings have you attended in the past?

The numbers below are based on 613 evaluation respondents.

	2024	2025	2026
0	45	97	112
1-3	306	116	163
4-6	211	50	91
7-9	N/A	37	57
10-12	N/A	31	46
More than 12	N/A	103	144

Of the past ARO meetings, which have you attended?

The numbers below are based on 1503 registrants.

Orlando, FL in 2025	710
Anaheim, CA in 2024	680
Orlando, FL in 2023	645
Virtual in 2022	471
Virtual in 2021	459
San Jose, CA in 2020	506
Meeting(s) prior to 2020	554

ARO Membership

The numbers below are based on 1503 registrants

Are you an ARO member?	88.6% - Yes
If you are not an ARO member, what are the major reasons for not joining?	67 - Financial burden 21 - Few obvious benefits of membership 18 - Already a member of many societies 67 - Have only just begun attending ARO meetings 51 - Do not often attend ARO meetings 6 - Forgot to renew 12 - It takes too long to both register and join 32 - Other*

REGISTRATION BREAKDOWN BY COUNTRY

Argentina	6	Mexico	1
Australia	11	Netherlands	17
Austria	22	New Zealand	1
Belgium	18	Poland	4
Canada	15	Puerto Rico	13
Chile	1	Slovakia	3
China	23	South Africa	1
Denmark	8	South Korea	35
Finland	1	Spain	11
France	38	Sweden	13
Germany	69	Switzerland	12
Hong Kong SAR China	3	Taiwan	7
Israel	9	United Kingdom	44
Italy	1	United States	1060
Japan	55		

REGISTRATION BREAKDOWN BY STATE

Alabama	2	Iowa	38	New Jersey	9
Arizona	3	Kansas	3	New York	78
Arkansas	1	Kentucky	12	North Carolina	12
California	96	Louisiana	6	Ohio	29
Colorado	16	Maine	2	Oklahoma	7
Connecticut	19	Maryland	137	Oregon	12
Delaware	1	Massachusetts	128	Pennsylvania	51
District of Columbia	11	Michigan	46	South Carolina	14
Florida	52	Minnesota	21	Tennessee	19
Georgia	5	Mississippi	6	Texas	41
Hawaii	1	Missouri	20	Utah	8
Idaho	1	Montana	1	Virginia	15
Illinois	56	Nebraska	23	Washington	19
Indiana	28	New Hampshire	4	Wisconsin	7

Meeting LOGISTICS



MEETING LOGISTICS

Please rate the following aspects on the meeting venue.

The percentages below represent the percent of respondents who rated the question or statement with “excellent” or “satisfactory”.

	2025	2026
Awards Reception	90.4% Excellent or Satisfactory	97.3% Excellent or Satisfactory
Airport Accessibility	94.5% Excellent or Satisfactory	98.6% Excellent or Satisfactory
Audio/visual services	91.6% Excellent or Satisfactory	96.8% Excellent or Satisfactory
Childcare arrangements	95.2% Excellent or Satisfactory	82.7% Excellent or Satisfactory
Closed captioning	82.5% Excellent or Satisfactory	95.4% Excellent or Satisfactory
Exercise options	87.6% Excellent or Satisfactory	91.9% Excellent or Satisfactory
Exhibitors	95.3% Excellent or Satisfactory	98.2% Excellent or Satisfactory
Hair Ball	96.7% Excellent or Satisfactory	96.4% Excellent or Satisfactory
Hotel Accommodations *Click here to view additional comments about the in-person meeting venue, including barriers you may have encountered.*	86.2% Excellent or Satisfactory	90.2% Excellent or Satisfactory

MEETING LOGISTICS

Please rate the following aspects on the meeting venue.

The percentages below represent the percent of respondents who rated the question or statement with “excellent” or “satisfactory”.

	2025	2026
Informal meeting spaces	95.5% Excellent or Satisfactory	92.4% Excellent or Satisfactory
Local food availability	49.3% Excellent or Satisfactory	91.9% Excellent or Satisfactory
Local safety	96.3% Excellent or Satisfactory	98.5% Excellent or Satisfactory
Local transportation	73.4% Excellent or Satisfactory	97.1% Excellent or Satisfactory
Mobile App	79.9% Excellent or Satisfactory	88.4% Excellent or Satisfactory
Nursing/pumping accommodations	92% Excellent or Satisfactory	90.2% Excellent or Satisfactory
Pre-arranged small meeting spaces	95.3% Excellent or Satisfactory	91.6% Excellent or Satisfactory
Speaker Ready Room	99.4% Excellent or Satisfactory	98.5% Excellent or Satisfactory

MEETING LOGISTICS - FUTURE MEETINGS

With the rising costs of meetings and ARO's fairly limited meeting budget, ARO has a narrow range of venues that will accommodate our budget (e.g. many venues have a high required spend on food and beverage). ARO could increase its meeting budget to increase the venue options, or downscale the meeting to keep costs stable despite rising meeting costs. Which of these options do you feel is an acceptable approach for ARO to consider?

	2025	2026
Increasing meeting budget through increased registration fees, to pay for more food and beverage provided by the meeting venue.	33% of respondents selected this option	33% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing conference features such as coffee/tea/drinks	12.9% of respondents selected this option	14.2% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing the overall length of the MWM meeting	41% of respondents selected this option	32.3% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing expenditures on travel awards	15.5% of respondents selected this option	12.4% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing expenditures on invited speaker funding	33.3% of respondents selected this option	34.7% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing expenditures on social events	22.3% of respondents selected this option	22.4% of respondents selected this option
Control meeting budget by reducing parallel scientific sessions to accommodate smaller venues	N/A	25% of respondents selected this option
Keep things as they are	30.6% of respondents selected this option	28.4% of respondents selected this option

MEETING LOGISTICS - FUTURE MEETINGS

Please note that attendees can select multiple responses to the below.

	2026
What do you like most about the ARO meeting that encourages you to attend? *Respondents were asked to select as many as applied.*	93.9% - Scientific Content 28.7% - Convenient Location 54.3% - Desirable Location 28.7% - Affordable Location 78.5% - Networking with Attendees 57.9% - Sense of Community 0.7% - Other*
Do you feel the frequency of emails from ARO is appropriate?	78.3% - Just About Right 21.67% - Too Many 0.03% - Too Few
Should ARO work toward moving the meeting to occur during the week (Sun-Thurs or Mon-Fri) instead of the Sat-Weds schedule we traditionally have? This would be to improve the ability for members with family responsibilities to attend and allow all participants to start and end the meeting with restful weekends.	35.02% - Monday - Friday 11.29% - Sunday-Thursday 53.69% - Saturday-Wednesday
Do you feel informed of upcoming events and strategic goals? Click here to view suggested methods to improve communication.	93.3% - Yes 6.7% - No
Do you feel that the website is accessible and easy to nagivate? https://aro.org/ Click here to view suggested methods to improve the website.	90.5% - Yes 9.5%- No

MEETING CONTENT

The percentages below represent the percent of respondents who rated the question or statement with “excellent”, “satisfactory”, or “yes”.

	2026
Please rate the Presidential Symposium *Click here to view comments regarding the Presidential Symposium and suggested topics for future meetings.*	87.1% Excellent or Good
Are you satisfied with how ARO and the Awards Committee recognizes and awards excellence in our community? *Click here to view additional comments about ARO awards or how ARO recognizes excellence.*	95.3% Yes
This year we have changed the timing of afternoon events with no programming during lunch and a 1.5 hour dedicated poster time before the afternoon talks start. Did you like it?	85.9% Yes
The Special Session* format is relatively new. A special session can take any format such as a workshop, moderated panel, etc. Did you like the format?	82.5% Yes
The Mini-Podium* format, with 4 talks presented in a 1 hour session, is relatively new. Did you like the format?	86.4% Yes
The Late-Breaking Podium* session format, with 4 talks presented in a 1-hour session was new this year. Did you like the format?	81.3% Yes
The Poster-Blitz sessions* included 3-minute talks delivered by poster presenters who are trainees. Did you like the format?	85.5% Yes

**Click here to view comments about the Special Session, Mini-Podium, Late-Breaking Podium, or Poster Blitz session formats.*

SESSION RATINGS

How would you rate the following spARO-organized mentoring sessions?

The following questions were designed to be answered by the students and post-docs of ARO only. The percentages below represent the percent of respondents who rated the question or statement with “excellent” or “good”.

	2025	2026
Mentor Meet and Greet	88.9% Excellent or Satisfactory	75.7% Excellent or Good
LGBTQIA+ Social	80.0% Excellent or Satisfactory	94.7% Excellent or Good
spARO Town Hall	90.3% Excellent or Satisfactory	93.3% Excellent or Good

	2026
spARO Reception	91.5% Excellent or Good
Science Communication (Virtual)	91.2% Excellent or Good
Science Advocacy (Virtual)	93.3% Excellent or Good
Transitioning to Industry (Virtual)	96.6% Excellent or Good
Finding a Postdoc (Virtual)	96.4% Excellent or Good

**Click here to view comments about spARO events and suggestions for future events.*

**Click here to view comments about spARO* member career goals and how ARO can support them.

SESSION COUNTS

Session Name	Count
Friday February 6, 2026	
PIHL Satellite Symposium	47
gEAR Session: Beginner Workshop - Introduction to gEAR	42
Saturday February 7, 2026	
Presidential Symposium - Part 1	465
Presidential Symposium - Part 2	387
Travel Award Luncheon	84
Special Session 1: Restoring the Sixth Sense Through Vestibular Implantation	115
Podium 1: Genetics of Hearing Loss: Screening, Sequencing and Outcomes	169
Podium 2: Neural Mechanisms of Speech Perception and Understanding	217
Honorary Symposium: Cortical Codes, Psychophysics and Prostheses at the Cocktail Party: The Contributions of John C. Middlebrooks	168
Poster Blitz Session I	108
Poster Blitz Session II	136
Memorial Symposium: Symposium on Neural Coding: Bertrand Delgutte's Seminal Research on Understanding Robust Hearing in Challenging Conditions	43
NIDCD Workshop: Navigating NIDCD Funding for Early Stage and New Investigators	40
NIDCD Workshop: NIDCD Extramural Clinical Trial Workshop	4
Sunday February 8, 2026	
Podium 3: Benchtop to Bedside and Back: Clinical Otolaryngology and Pathology	111
Podium 4: Multi-disciplinary Research of the Middle Ear	53
Symposium 1: In Vitro Models as Relevant Tools to Support Translational Hearing Research	143

SESSION COUNTS

Session Name	Count
Podium 5: Auditory Prostheses #1	152
Podium 6: OTOF Gene Therapy Trial Updates and New Targets: GJB2 & STRC	439
Young Investigator Symposium 1: Real-World Acoustic Environments and Their Impact on Hearing and Well-Being	436
Symposium 2: New Neurostimulation Strategies for Auditory Restoration	140
Podium 7: Neural Correlates of Tinnitus	103
Late Breaking Podium	54
gEAR Session: Advanced Workshop	58
ARO General Assembly - All are invited!	126
Inner Ear Courses	56
NIDCD Workshop: Changes at the NIH for Established Investigators	57
SEED.NIH.GOV Helping Innovators Turn Discovery into Health	11
Monday February 9, 2026	
Podium 8: Molecular Regulation of Hair Bundle Assembly and Function	172
Podium 9: Auditory Cortex & Thalamus: Human and Animal Studies	133
Symposium 3: No SOX, No Shoes, No Service: Critical Roles for Sox in the Inner Ear	123
Podium 10: Patterning and Cellular Specification of the Auditory and Vestibular System	213
Podium 11: Hearing Loss: Consequences and Adaptation	211
Special Session: Auditory Periphery to Cortex: Research Advances and Career Journeys	88
Podium 12: Immune Regulation and Dysregulation in the Ear: From Animal Models to Humans	148
Mini Podium 1: Psychoacoustics in the Service of Active Auditory Perception	78

SESSION COUNTS

Session Name	Count
Special Session: Harnessing Human Subcortical and Peripheral Responses to Natural Speech for Translational and Basic Science	113
Mini Podium 2: Ear Repair Mechanisms: Unlocking Sensory Regeneration Across Vertebrates	128
ARO Awards Ceremony	288
Tuesday February 10, 2026	
Podium 14: Inner Ear: Cochlear Mechanics	88
Symposium 4: Inner Ear Glia and Their Roles in Hearing and Hearing Loss	115
Podium 15: Vestibular: Basic Research & Clinical	114
Podium 16: Inner Ear Physiology and Pathology: Mechanisms of Synaptic Transmission, Energetics, Cochlear Amplification and Hearing Loss	205
Podium 17: From Cochlea to Cortex: Aging-Related Changes in Auditory Processing and Brain Health	164
Symposium 5: Vestibular Contributions to Cognitive Decline: From Inner Ear Trauma to Aging	84
Special Symposium - COMMeND	28
Mini Podium 3: Inner Ear: Damage and Protection of Hair Cells	93
Mini Podium 4: Auditory Brainstem: Structure & Function	112
Mini Podium 5: Hearing and Balance in the Balance: Injury of Inner Ear Neurons and Synapses	110
Mini Podium 6: Binaural Hearing: From Neural Responses to Human Psychophysics	93
Memorial Symposium: Jim Hudspeth	145
spARO Town Hall	24
Don Caspary Honorary Symposium	63

SESSION COUNTS

Session Name	Count
Wednesday February 11, 2026	
Podium 18: Auditory Prostheses #2	80
Podium 19: Next-Gen Approaches in Ear Gene Therapy: Tools, Targets, and Regenerative Pathways	201
Symposium 6: Pitch: New Perspectives on a Classic Problem	77
Podium 20: Molecular and Cellular Mechanisms Underlying Hair Cell Physiology	122
Special Session 4: Hearing Science at the Technological Frontier: Tools, Insights, and Integration	83
Podium 21: Auditory and Vestibular Circuit Assembly	86

Attendee COMMENTS



ATTENDEE COMMENTS

- Please add any additional comments about the in-person meeting venue, including barriers you may have encountered.
- Please write any additional comments you have regarding the Presidential Symposium, including suggestions for topics for future ARO meetings.
- Please write any additional comments about the Special Session, Mini-Podium, Late-breaking, or Poster Blitz formats.
- Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve the ARO meetings in the next 5 years?
- What factors, if any, might discourage you from attending the next ARO MidWinter Meeting (e.g. funding, location, visa issues)?
- Do you have any suggestions for ways to build community and form collaborations at future ARO meetings?
- Please suggest any short course topics you would be interested in attending at a future MWM meeting.
- The ARO Education Committee offers year-round virtual content including the ARO Seminar Series and Coffee Hour. Are there specific topics or types of content you would like to see?
- Please write any additional comments about ARO awards or how ARO recognizes excellence in our community.
- Please write any additional comments or suggestions you may have about the content of the MidWinter Meeting.
- Do you have any suggestions for other activities to support your professional development and sense of belonging with ARO?
- For future ARO meetings, do you have any suggestions for improving accessibility for yourself or other attendees?
- Are there any questions we should add to next year's survey?



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