



Pew Internet
Pew Internet & American Life Project

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PewResearchCenter

Americans living with disability and their technology profile

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One in four Americans live with a disability that interferes with activities of daily living

According to a national survey conducted in September 2010, 27% of American adults live with a disability that interferes with activities of daily living, including:

- 15% of American adults who say they have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.
- 11% of American adults who say that, because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, they have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- 9% of American adults who say they have serious difficulty hearing.
- 8% of American adults who say that, because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, they have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping.
- 7% of American adults who say they are blind or have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.
- 3% of American adults who say they have trouble dressing or bathing.

Americans living with disability are more likely than other adults to live in lower-income households: 46% of adults with a disability live in households with \$30,000 or less in annual income, compared with 26% of adults who report no disabilities and live in households with that level of income.

They are also likely to have low levels of education: 61% of Americans living with a disability have a high school education or less, compared with 40% of adults who report no disabilities and have that level of educational attainment.

Americans living with a disability are also likely to be older: 58% are age 50 or older, compared with 36% of adults who report no disabilities who are that age.

These patterns are in line with the findings of the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the U.S. Census.¹

Using the internet can be a challenge for people living with disabilities

Two percent of American adults say they have a disability or illness that makes it harder or impossible for them to use the internet.

The Pew Internet Project provides the following data as context for the continuing conversation about who does – and does not – use the internet in the U.S., including a proposal to extend the enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act to include websites operated by certain entities.² A call for

¹ Please see Cornell University's Online Resource for U.S. Disability Statistics: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/disabilitystatistics/index.cfm>

² "Fact Sheet: Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Accessibility of Web Information and Services Provided by Entities Covered by the ADA" (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division: Americans with Disabilities Act

comments on the proposed change was announced by the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department on July 26, 2010. The public comment period will close on January 24, 2011.

Americans living with a disability are less likely than other adults to use the internet

Fifty-four percent of adults living with a disability use the internet, compared with 81% of adults who report none of the disabilities listed in the survey.

Statistically speaking, disability is associated with being older, less educated, and living in a lower-income household. By contrast, internet use is statistically associated with being younger, college-educated, and living in a higher-income household. Thus, it is not surprising that people living with disability report lower rates of internet access than other adults. However, when all of these demographic factors are controlled, living with a disability in and of itself is negatively correlated with someone's likelihood to have internet access.

People living with disability, once they are online, are also less likely than other internet users to have high-speed access or wireless access. For example, 41% of adults living with a disability have broadband at home, compared with 69% of those without a disability. This finding is in line with a much larger 2009 federal survey which looked at the data another way: 39% of American adults who do not have broadband internet access are living with a disability.³

Pew Internet's research has consistently shown that broadband access and mobile access deepen an internet user's relationship with the online world:

- 43% of Americans say that people who do not have broadband at home are at a major disadvantage when it comes to finding out about job opportunities or learning career skills.
- 34% of Americans see a lack of broadband access as a major disadvantage to getting health information.⁴
- People with wireless internet access are more likely than other internet users to post their own health experiences online or to access the health information created by other people in online forums and discussion groups.⁵

Home Page). Available at: http://www.ada.gov/anprm2010/factsht_web_anrpm_2010.htm More information: <http://www.ada.gov/anprm2010/anprm2010.htm>

³ "Broadband Adoption and Use in America," by John B. Horrigan. (Federal Communications Commission: February 2010). Available at: http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-296442A1.pdf

⁴ "Home Broadband 2010" (Pew Internet Project: August 11, 2010). Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Home-Broadband-2010.aspx>

⁵ "The Social Life of Health Information" (Pew Internet Project: June 11, 2009). Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/8-The-Social-Life-of-Health-Information.aspx>

Methodology

This report is based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between August 9 and September 13, 2010, among a sample of 3,001 adults, age 18 and older. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. For results based on internet users (n=2,065), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Questions

DIS001 Thinking again about your own health... Do you have serious difficulty hearing?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 9 | Yes |
| | 90 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS002 Are you blind or do you have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 7 | Yes |
| | 93 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS003 Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 11 | Yes |
| | 89 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS004 Do you have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 15 | Yes |
| | 84 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS005 Do you have difficulty dressing or bathing?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 3 | Yes |
| | 97 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS006 Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 8 | Yes |
| | 92 | No |
| | * | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |

DIS4 Do you have any disability or illness that makes it harder or impossible for you to use the Internet, or not?

CURRENT

| | | |
|---|----|------------|
| % | 2 | Yes |
| | 97 | No |
| | 1 | Don't know |
| | * | Refused |