

MARIA (49)

Bilingual community health worker

- Community college + healthcare certificate
- Bilingual (Spanish dominant)
- Smartphone from her phone service, home computer primarily her husband's, for his business

“I love this. It’s all here ... when I can find it.”

Ability

Prefers Spanish language sites, when she can find them; needs information and instructions written clearly

Aptitude

Adventurous, but not very proficient; husband and daughter set up bookmarks for her

Attitude

Thinks it’s wonderful to be able to have her favorite websites with her at all times

Assistive Technology

Skype Translation site

“When a site is confusing, I just leave.”

“When I hear and see it, health information makes more sense.”

17.8 million people in the U.S. speak English “less than well.”

Hispanic U.S. adults are more likely to use mobile devices and mobile search. They are more likely to take mobile pictures and video.

CAROL (74)

Grandmother with macular degeneration

- Graduated from business college
- Retired; worked as a bookkeeper for a construction company for 25 years
- Older computer at home; basic mobile phone

“I just couldn’t understand what the screen was saying.”

Ability

First signs of macular degeneration, mild arthritis; hearing aid; no special AT on computer

Aptitude

Used computers when she worked as a bookkeeper, but now her grandkids keep her old home computer updated

Attitude

Willing, but not adventurous

Assistive Technology

Enlarges text, but little other adjustment

“My eyesight has been going for years.”

“Some sites have text that’s just so small.”

11 million people in the U.S. have age-related macular degeneration; many more have other forms of degenerative eye diseases.

After age 65, people have steep increases in disability, with over 59% experiencing a loss of hearing, vision, or dexterity. (U.S. Census says 38% of all adults have disabilities.) They are more likely to take mobile pictures and video.

EMILY (24)

Cerebral palsy, living independently

- Graduated from high school and working on a college degree
- Lives in a small independent living facility
- Works part-time at a local community center

“The ones I like seem to have everything in the right place.”

Ability

Cerebral palsy, difficult to use hands and has some difficulty speaking clearly; uses a motorized wheel chair

Aptitude

Uses the computer well, with the right input device; good at finding efficient search terms

Attitude

Wants to do everything for herself; can be impatient

Assistive Technology

Augmented & Alternative Communication (AAC) with speech generator, iPad, scooter with joystick control

“When I go online, I just want to do things like everyone else.”

“The online form didn’t say anything about it. The whole trip was a waste.”

800,000 children and adults in the U.S. have one of the forms of cerebral palsy.

People with disabilities are often unemployed or underemployed. Among all U.S. working age (18–64) people with disabilities, only 21% are employed full- or part-time.

Jacob (32)

Blind paralegal and a bit of a geek

- College graduate, legal training courses
- Shares an apartment with a friend
- Paralegal, reviews cases and writes case summaries
- Laptop, braille display, iPhone

Ability

Blind since birth with some light perception

Aptitude

Skilled technology user

Attitude

Digital native, early adopter, persists until he gets it

Assistive Technology

Screen reader (JAWS on his laptop, VoiceOver on his phone) Audio recorder (to take notes), Braille display

“When a site works with my screen reader, I have control over my own experience.”

“Sometimes I miss important information because it’s hidden.”

“Sometimes I need to know what color something is.”

People with visual disabilities make up about 2.6% of the world’s population (about 0.6% are blind).

In the U.S., about 1.8 million people can’t easily see printed words and only about 10% of people who are blind can read and write braille.