

UNREPENTANT

...MY PERSPECTIVE – WITHOUT APOLOGY

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User Statistics – People with Disabilities



(a.k.a. “Can you give me some numbers?”)

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Often, decisions and compromises must be made in projects large and small. Experienced decision makers surround themselves with factual data so that they can weigh the benefits and risks of any crucial decision. When it comes to online accessibility, it is important to remember that is not just about “disabled” users – **it’s about all**

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ABOUT ME



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users – “disabled” is a label that many people do not want or feel applies to them.

A study by Microsoft in 2003 showed that among adult computer users in the United States:

- 1 in 4 has a vision difficulty
- 1 in 4 has a dexterity difficulty
- 1 in 5 has a hearing difficulty

The Microsoft Survey also found that 16% of users have a cognitive difficulty or impairment, and few (3%) have a speech difficulty or impairment.

Actual study numbers show:

- 17% (21.9 million) of computer users have a mild visual difficulty or impairment, and 9% (11.1 million) of computer users have a severe visual difficulty or impairment.
- 19% (24.4 million) of computer users have a mild dexterity difficulty or impairment, and 5% (6.8 million) of computer users have a severe dexterity difficulty or impairment.
- 18% (24.0 million) of computer users have a mild hearing difficulty or impairment, and 2% (2.5 million) of computer users have a severe hearing difficulty or impairment.

(Source: Study Commissioned by Microsoft Corporation and Conducted by Forrester Research, Inc. –

www.microsoft.com/enable/research/phase1.aspx)

Other statistics can also provide a strong argument for ensuring your on-line presence is accessible:

1. 12.8 percent of adults (21-64) are disabled in some way. Bjelland, M.J., Erickson, W. A., Lee, C. G. (2008, November 8). Disability Statistics from the American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC). Retrieved April 7, 2009 from www.disabilitystatistics.org

I am a 16 year veteran of Web Accessibility, living and working in Austin, Texas. Currently Principal Accessibility Strategist at Deque Systems Inc., I have previously held accessibility related positions at JPMorgan Chase and Stanford University. I am also actively involved with the [W3C](#) - the international internet standards body - where I previously co-chaired a subcommittee on the [accessibility requirements](#) for media elements in HTML5. Currently I am involved in work related to Cognitive disabilities, CSS and SVG accessibility, and emergent standards related to HTML5.1. [My relatively up-to-date resumé](#) can be found elsewhere on this site.

Everything on the site is my opinion (except comments written by others, which are their opinions). I have strong opinions, and the views expressed here are mine, and not necessarily those of my employer or the W3C. At times, you may not agree with these opinions, or how I choose to express them. This is not my problem. Clear? You can also read my complete

2. 8 to 12% of males of European origin have a color deficiency.
[Accessibility and the Web](#)
3. Approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss –
[NIDCD Health Information](#)
4. Only 1 out of 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one –
[NIDCD Health Information](#)
5. 5% of people have javascript turned off –
[W3 Schools](#)
6. Internet Explorer 6 still has a 17% browser share –
[W3 Schools](#)

Disability Statistics for the U.S. by Sex and Age

U.S. civilian non-institutionalized population 5 years and over – there are about 49.7 million people (about 19 percent) who are considered “disabled”, again numbers that are consistent with the Microsoft survey.

Population	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Population 5 years and over	257,167,527	124,636,825	132,530,702
Population 5 years and over With a Disability	49,746,248	24,439,531	25,306,717
Population 5 years and over Percent with a Disability	19.3%	19.6%	19.1%
Population 5 to	45,133,667	23,125,324	22,008,343

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15 years			
Population 5 to 15 years With a Disability	2,614,919	1,666,230	948,689
Population 5 to 15 years Percent with a Disability	5.8%	7.2%	4.3%
Population 16 to 64 years	178,687,234	87,570,583	91,116,651
Population 16 to 64 years With a Disability	33,153,211	17,139,019	16,014,192
Population 16 to 64 years Percent with a Disability	18.6%	19.6%	17.6%
Population 65 years and over	33,346,626	13,940,918	19,405,708
Population 65 years and over With a Disability	13,978,118	5,634,282	8,343,836
65 years and over Percent with a Disability	41.9%	40.4%	43.0%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Summary File 3.
Retrieved May 20, 2005, from American FactFinder

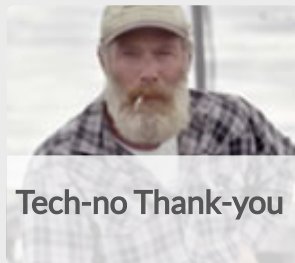
<http://factfinder.census.gov> and tabulated by accessible-systems.com)

...and don't forget...

These numbers rely to a certain extent on identified or self-identified users-with-impairments. Many people will have user requirements that most people often do not think of as impairments or disabilities; however accessible content delivery benefits these people too – be it the ability to enlarge the text on the screen (visual impairment), to having clear, easy and user-friendly site navigation (cognitive impairments).

The anonymity of internet usage makes tracking users and user requirements for your particular web site difficult to impossible. But by looking at general population numbers and statistics it should become very clear that between 20% and 25% of the average web site user-base will benefit from ensuring that accessible design and development techniques are incorporated into your current or next-generation web property.

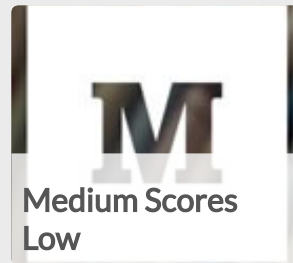
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Posted by **John**

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