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CSCI 3150: Universal Design for Digital Media

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2025-02-21

Report on Disability and Technology Demographics

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Country: | USA | South Korea | Total (Both) |
| Population:[[1]](#footnote-1) | ~342,000,000 | ~51,500,000 | ~393,500,000 |
| Internet users: | ~327,000,000 (93.7%)[[2]](#footnote-2) | ~47,750,000 (97.4%)[[3]](#footnote-3) | ~374,750,000 |
| Disabled individuals: | ~73,400,000 (28.7%) (2022)[[4]](#footnote-4) | ~2,600,000 (5.0%) (2023)[[5]](#footnote-5) | ~76,000,000 |
| Vision-impaired individuals: | ~14,400,000 (5.5%) (2022) | ~250,000 (0.5%) (2023) | ~14,650,000 |
| Mobility-impaired individuals: | ~34,000,000 (12.2%) (2022) | ~1,150,000 (2.2%) (2023) | ~35,150,000 |
| Hearing-impaired individuals: | ~17,700,000 (6.2%) (2022) | ~430,000 (0.8%) (2023) | ~18,130,000 |
| People with learning disabilities: | ~33,200,000 (13.9%) (2022) | ~230,000 (0.4%) (2023) | ~33,430,000 |
| Age split: 0-19[[6]](#footnote-6) | ~79,800,000 (23.5%) | ~7,500,000 (14.6%) | ~87,300,000 |
| Age split: 20-34 | ~68,300,000 (20.2%) | ~9,400,000 (18.3%) | ~77,700,000 |
| Age split: 35-49 | ~65,500,000 (19.3%) | ~11,000,000 (21.4%) | ~76,500,000 |
| Age split: 50-64 | ~61,000,000 (18.1%) | ~12,800,000 (24.9%) | ~73,800,000 |
| Age split: 65+ | ~63,300,000 (18.7%) | ~10,700,000 (20.9%) | ~74,000,000 |
| 10-year projected age split: 0-19[[7]](#footnote-7) | ~76,200,000 (21.7%) | ~5,000,000 (9.9%) | ~81,200,000 |
| 10-year projected age split: 20-34 | ~68,300,000 (19.5%) | ~7,400,000 (14.7%) | ~75,700,000 |
| 10-year projected age split: 35-49 | ~70,300,000 (19.9%) | ~10,400,000 (20.5%) | ~80,700,000 |
| 10-year projected age split: 50-64 | ~60,200,000 (17.2%) | ~12,000,000 (24.0%) | ~72,200,000 |
| 10-year projected age split: 65+ | ~75,800,000 (21.5%) | ~15,500,000 (30.9%) | ~91,300,000 |
| Mobile device users: | ~317,000,000 (92.8%)[[8]](#footnote-8) | ~45,500,000 (88.4%)[[9]](#footnote-9) | ~362,500,000 |
| 4-year projected mobile users: | ~327,500,000 (95.3%)[[10]](#footnote-10) | ~48,700,000 (95.1%)[[11]](#footnote-11) | ~376,200,000 |

This data provides some useful insight into the prevalence of disability and the need for universal design. While I knew that there is a significant portion of the US population that deals with disability, I did not realize how large that percentage is. This shows just how important it is to employ the theory of Universal Design — if one was to show a 28.7% improvement at work, they would be instantly promoted. By using universal design and accommodating for all disabled people, we can get that 28.7% (in the United States) from the start.

The differences between the data for the United States and South Korea are a mix of surprising and expected. I was previously aware of the differences in technology usage and age demographics between South Korea and the United States. The age difference is a result of economic conditions and birth rates, and the technology differences are likely a result of the prevalence of public internet café’s in South Korea. However, I find it very surprising how much lower disability is in Korea, especially considering how the Korean population trends older than the US population. This leads me to wonder about the cause of this discrepancy: different definitions of what counts as disability; cultural differences leading fewer Koreans to identify as disabled; a cheaper and more robust healthcare system in South Korea; or some other factor.

Another difference that I found interesting is the difference between the percentage of disabled people who have learning disabilities in the United States and in South Korea. I strongly suspect that this discrepancy is the result of what each country considers a learning disability — the South Korean database that I sourced this statistic from describes learning disability as “mental retardation.” While this term is no longer used widely in the United States, it has a connotation of a more significant disability. In contrast, the US statistic uses the term “cognitive disability,” which has a connotation of a much wider range of mental disorders, some of which I know from experience are not considered disability in South Korea (such as ADHD). I personally appreciate this wider view of what counts as disability in the United States, as I have personally benefited from accommodations that serve these relatively “minor” cognitive disabilities.

1. https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/idb/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.statista.com/topics/2237/internet-usage-in-the-united-states/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.statista.com/topics/2230/internet-usage-in-south-korea/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For all disability splits: https://dhds.cdc.gov/LP?CategoryId=DISEST&View=Table [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For all disability splits: https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=117&tblId=DT\_11761\_N001&conn\_path=I2&language=en [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For all age splits: https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/idb/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For all age splits: https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/idb/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.statista.com/statistics/275591/number-of-mobile-internet-user-in-usa/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.statista.com/statistics/321408/smartphone-user-penetration-in-south-korea/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://www.statista.com/statistics/275591/number-of-mobile-internet-user-in-usa/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. https://www.statista.com/statistics/321408/smartphone-user-penetration-in-south-korea/ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)