

# *The* *Harris Poll*

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A Service of Harris Interactive

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## **HOW THE INTERNET IS IMPROVING THE LIVES OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES**

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by Humphrey Taylor

The Internet is having a very positive impact on the lives of adults with disabilities who are online, and this impact is much greater than it is among adults without disabilities. As the number of adults with disabilities online continues to increase, the Internet is helping to greatly improve the quality of their lives. Specifically, it allows adults with disabilities to be better informed, more connected to the world around them and puts them in touch with people who have similar interests and experiences.

These conclusions are all drawn from a Harris Interactive Poll of 535 adults with disabilities and 614 adults without disabilities, who access the Internet, and who were surveyed online between March 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 5<sup>th</sup>. This research was conducted for the National Organization on Disability using a grant from Aetna US Healthcare.

The data from the survey were statistically weighted to be representative of all adults, with and without disabilities who are online, whether from home, work, school, library or other location. People with disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to be online (43% v. 57%). In particular they are much less likely to be online from work (16% v. 30%), because for fewer of them are working.

The main findings of this online Harris Poll include (with all percentages based on adults who are online):

- Adults with disabilities spend, on average, twice as much time online as adults without disabilities who are not – 20 hours per week compared to 10 hours per week.
- Adults with disabilities are much more likely than adults without disabilities to report that the Internet has significantly improved the quality of their lives (48% vs. 27%)

- Adults with disabilities are also more likely than adults without disabilities to report that the Internet has helped them to:
  - Be better informed about the world (52% vs. 39%)
  - Feel connected to the world (44% vs. 38%)
  - Reach out to people with similar interests as experiences (42% vs. 30%)
- Conversely, adults without disabilities are slightly more likely than adults with disabilities to say that the Internet has significantly helped them communicate and socialize with close friends, relatives and neighbors (49% vs. 42%).

Further analysis by age points to interesting differences in the use of the Internet between adults with and without disabilities. For adults with disabilities, those who are younger (under 30) tend to use the Internet more often – an average of 25 hours versus 8 hours than younger adults (under 30) without disabilities.

In addition, even though the average number of hours spent on the Internet decreases somewhat as adults with disabilities get older, those who are older say that the Internet has significantly improved the quality of their lives in greater numbers than comparably aged adults without disabilities.

*Humphrey Taylor is the Chairman of The Harris Poll.*

**TABLE 1**

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND PEOPLE WITHOUT DISABILITIES WHO ARE ONLINE**

Base: All Online

“At “home”, “work” and “another location”, do you personally use the computer to access an online service such as CompuServe or America Online, or not?”

“At “home”, “work” and “another location”, do you personally use the computer to access the Internet, or not?”

“At “home”, “work” and “another location”, do you personally use the computer to access the World Wide Web, or not?”

Asked for “home”, “work” and “another location”.

	<b>Adults with Disabilities %</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities %</b>
Online from home	30	48
Online from work	16	30
Another location	21	21
<b>Online total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>57</b>

Note: Many people are online from two locations.

*(Based on aggregated Harris Polls 11/99 to 4/00)*

**TABLE 2-A**

**TIME SPENT PER WEEK ONLINE**

Base: All Online

“Excluding e-mail, how many hours a week do you spend on the Internet or the World Wide Web?”

	<b>Adults with Disabilities %</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities %</b>
Less than 6 hours	18	21
6 to 10 hours	15	30
11 to 15 hours	10	12
16 or more hours	58	37
Average (median) hours per week	20	10

**TABLE 2-B**

**AVERAGE (MEDIAN) HOURS PER WEEK – BY AGE**

Base: All Online

	<b>Adults with Disabilities (Median Hours)</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities (Median Hours)</b>
Under 30 years old	25	8
30 – 44 years old	25	11
45 – 64 years old	20	15
65 or older	20	18

**TABLE 3-A**

**IMPACT OF INTERNET ON QUALITY OF LIFE**

Base: All Online

“Has the Internet significantly improved, somewhat improved, or had no effect on your quality of life?”

	<b>Adults with Disabilities %</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities %</b>
No effect	11	15
Somewhat improved quality of life	41	58
Significantly improved quality of life	48	27

**TABLE 3-B**

**IMPACT OF INTERNET ON QUALITY OF LIFE – BY AGE**

Base: All Online

Base: Significantly Improved Quality of Life

	<b>Adults with Disabilities %</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities %</b>
Under 30 years old	19	36
30 – 44 years old	52	26
45 – 64 years old	47	28
65 or older	56	6

**TABLE 4**

**IMPACT OF INTERNET ON CONNECTING AND INFORMING PEOPLE**

Base: All Online

“Specifically, how has the Internet affected your ability to do each of the following?”

<b>INTERNET HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED:</b>	<b>Adults with Disabilities %</b>	<b>Adults without Disabilities %</b>
Being better informed about world around me	52	39
Feeling connected to the world around me	44	38
Reaching out to people who have similar interests or experiences	42	30
Communicated and socialize with close friends, relatives or neighbors	42	49

## Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States between March 22<sup>nd</sup> – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000, among nationwide cross section of 535 adults with disabilities and 614 adults without disabilities.

Data were weighted by age, sex, education, income, race/ethnicity, and region, as well as propensity to be online (a composite of several factors) in order to generalize the results to the national population.

In theory, with a randomly chosen sample of this size and after weighting the data, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 2 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population of the United States had been polled. The sample used by Harris Interactive is not a random sample. While individuals have been randomly sampled from our database for this survey, they have previously chosen to take part in the Harris Interactive database.

There are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. These potential sources of error include question wording and question order, non-response, and screening (e.g. for likely voters). It is difficult or impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors so the words "margin of error" should be avoided when reporting all survey data.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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**Contact Harris Interactive, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003  
or by fax - (212) 539- 9669  
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**Voice -** (212) 539-9697  
**Email -** [Clee@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:Clee@harrisinteractive.com)  
**Web site -** <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/>  
**Fax -** (212) 539-9669