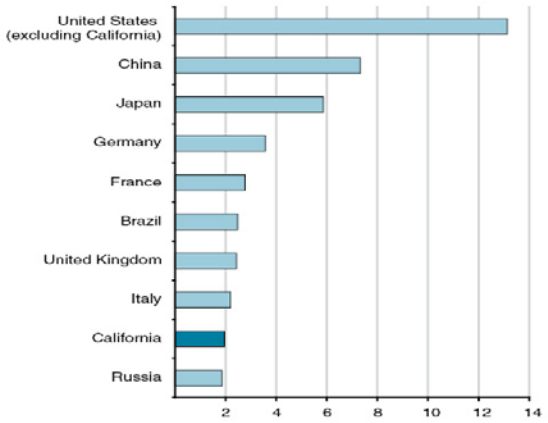
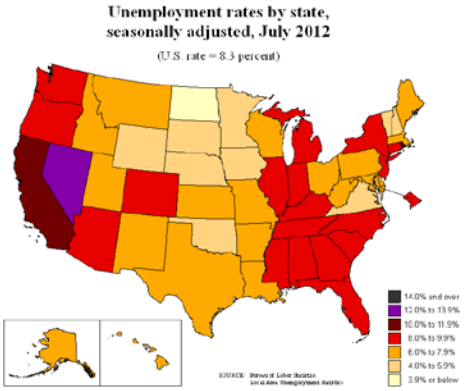
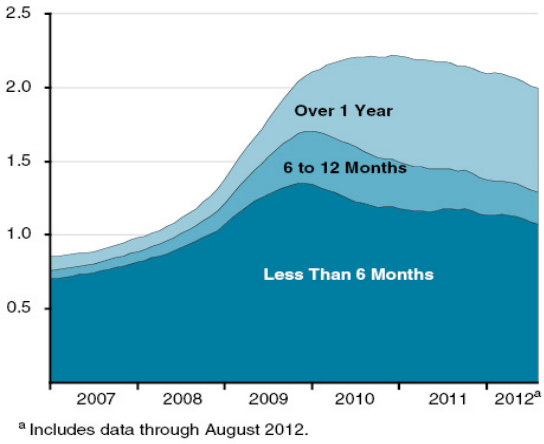
Public Accessibility Update
February 12, 2013

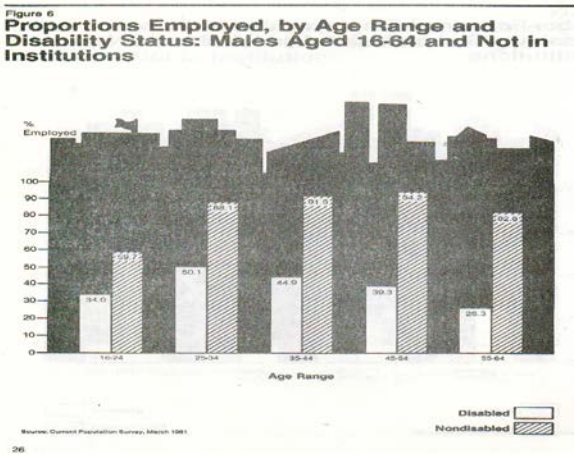
California, the ninth largest economy in the world, is the state in the U.S. with the highest rate of unemployment.





The number of workers seeking jobs who have been unemployed for more than six months has risen steadily over the last five years.[1] Such has contributed significantly to the ***employment disparity*** between those persons with and those without a disability.





A logical question that one may ask is "***What efforts are being made to bridge the non-disability/disability employment gap?"***

In evaluating the types of employment opportunities expanding in California, the *California Legislative Analyst Office*, found that;

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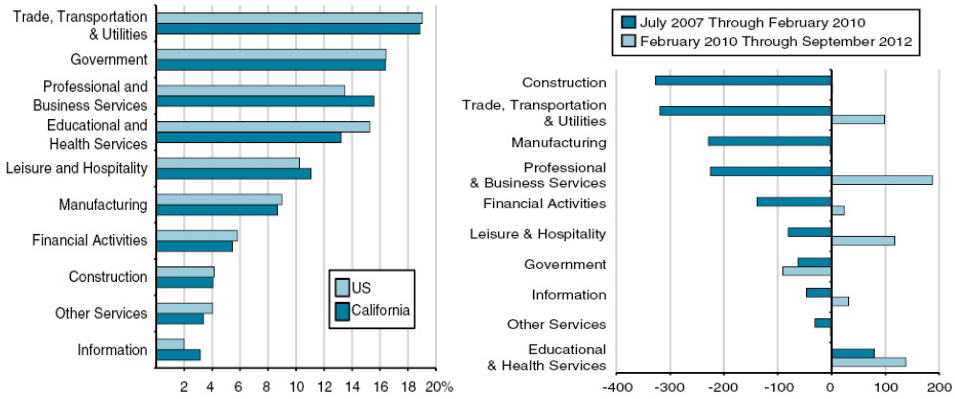
[1] ***January 2, 2013, Cal Facts***, California Legislative Analyst Office, California's Nonpartisan Fiscal and Public Policy Advisor.

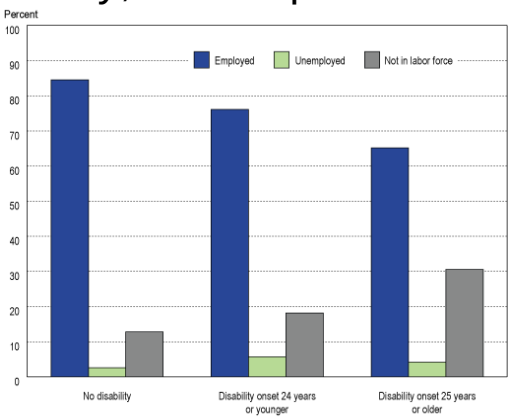
"California has an above–average share of jobs in professional business services and in information… technology and film/television production.""



The employment opportunities that are expanding are in fields with job skill requirements that involve information technology and "*information processing*." In acknowledgement of the need for persons with communication related limitations to have accessible forms of information in their work and in performing their daily life activities, the California Legislature incorporated into California law the Federal accessible information technology standards proscribed by Section ***508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973*** In a ***2001 California Legislative Counsel*** *Digest* for this legislation (***S.B. 105, Burton***), it was stated that:

> *"Approximately 70 percent of employable blind and visually impaired individuals are unemployed….*
>
> *It is the primary function of the Department of Rehabilitation to prepare and place persons with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired, in meaningful jobs.*
>
> *The department has a long-standing dismal record of placing the blind and visually impaired in employment. During the last 20 years, a steady decline in the department's placement rates has led to the situation where California ranks 48th among the 50 states in the placement of the blind and visually impaired.*

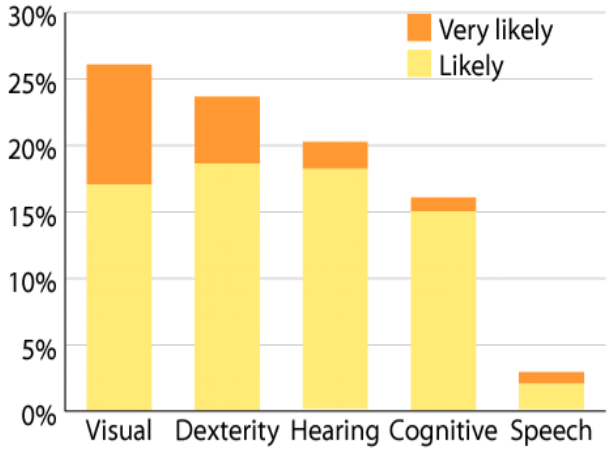
Today, ***75%*** of persons with visual limitations are unemployed.



The impact of the 75% of unemployment rate of persons with visual limitations is really higher, due to the fact that not all persons in this disability category are actually in the workforce.

*To **SEE** or not to **SEE**! That is **NOT** the question;* at least, it is not the ***ONLY question*** that should be asked in the process of defining persons with a disability for witch accommodations are needed to enable their effective access, use and benefit to the Internet and other systems of information. In a person's visual information acquisition and processing system, defects can occur anywhere with varying results of visual function. The majority of these conditions do not cause ***blindness***.

Most persons with visual limitations that are able to benefit from accessible features of information technology are ***not*** ***blind***. They generally would be classified as a person having *Low vision*. Most of them are ***likely*** or ***very likely*** to benefit from information technology that is "***visually accessible.***"



	Likely (millions)	Very likely (millions)	Total
Visual	21.9	11.1	**33.0**
Dexterity	24.4	6.8	**31.2**
Hearing	24.0	2.5	**26.5**
Cognitive	19.5	1.7	**21.2**
Speech	2.5	1.1	**3.6**

Base: US 18- to 64-year-old computer users

Source: Study commissioned by Microsoft, conducted by Forrester Research, Inc., 2003

Their information acquisition process generally requires their ability to have the means to manipulate their visual environment to compensate for what may be defects in their visual system. Recognition as a "*person with a disability*" to be afforded "*civil rights*" equivalent to persons that may be blind has been a relatively recent occurrence as a result of the passage of the 2008 *Amendments of the Federal American with Disabilities Act of 1990*.

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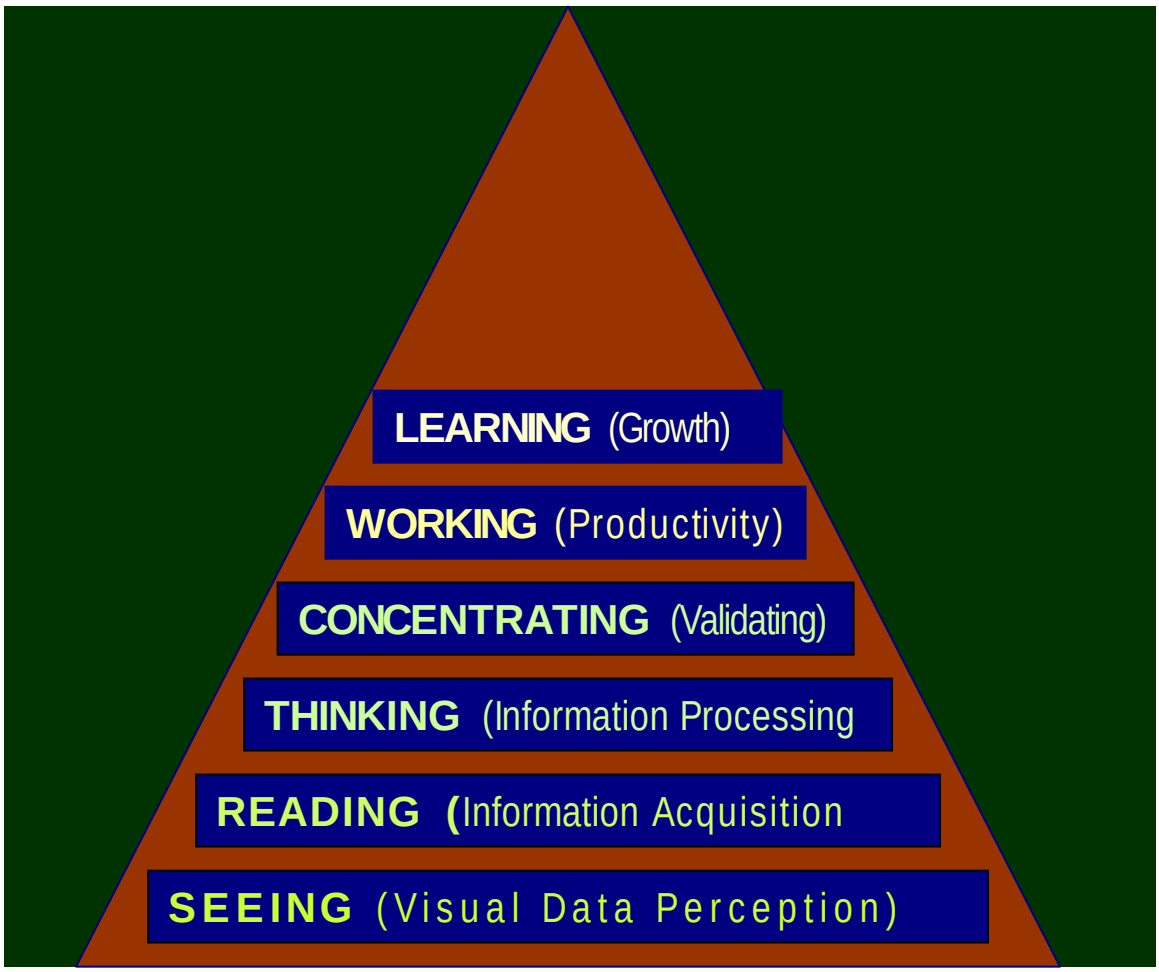
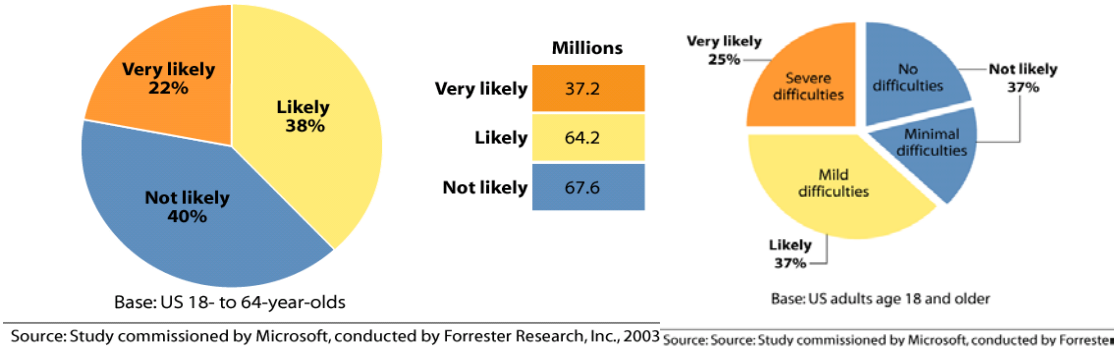


According to a study conducted by Forrester Data and commissioned by Microsoft Corp, Accessible computer technology, often associated only with people with disabilities, can benefit a much larger segment of the population.



Source: Study commissioned by Microsoft, conducted by Forrester Research, Inc., 2003 Source: Source: Study commissioned by Microsoft, conducted by Forreste

While accessibility options were originally designed for people with disabilities, the Forrester study shows that 57 percent of current working-age computer users may benefit from accessible technology because of mild to severe vision, hearing, dexterity, speech and cognitive difficulties and impairments.

The majority of persons using and relying upon accessibility information technology primarily leverage the advantage of the built-in and other computer environment accessibility tools.[2] Such accessibility features, tools and techniques enable the user to define their computer accessibility environment. Whether a person has or does not have a disability, the general and consistent application and extension of such standards benefits both.

Existing California law, that has fully incorporated the Federal information technology accessibility standards, requires State funded agencies, their contractors, programs, activities, services and facilities (e.g., the Internet) to acquire and use the "***most accessible"* information technology**. Full compliance with this provision of the law would substantially contribute to a ***progressive improvement*** in the quality of public and business services for those with communication limitations.

[2] Microsoft Windows Operating System Built-in Accessibility Features.