

2. Postsecondary Education

Over the past decades, enrollment in postsecondary education has become increasingly prevalent. Between 1960 and 2004, there was a 26-percentage-point increase in the college enrollment rate of recent high school graduates (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2006). As the American economy becomes progressively more knowledge based, attaining a postsecondary education becomes more critical (Carnevale and Desrochers 2003). For example, only 20 percent of workers needed at least some college for their jobs in 1959; by 2000, that number had increased to 56 percent (Carnevale and Fry 2000).

Along with their peers in the general population, youth with disabilities are increasingly focusing on postsecondary education. Postsecondary education is a primary post-high school goal for more than four out of five secondary school students with disabilities who have transition plans (Cameto, Levine, and Wagner 2004). In addition, youth with disabilities increasingly are taking rigorous academic courses in high school, including college-preparatory courses, such as a foreign language and science (Wagner, Newman, and Cameto 2004).

However, even when their high school programs prepare them for postsecondary education, students with disabilities can encounter a variety of challenges in the transition from secondary to postsecondary school. Postsecondary schools are guided by a legal framework of rights and responsibilities that is different from the framework governing secondary schools. When students leave high school, their education no longer is covered under the IDEA umbrella but instead is under the auspices of two civil rights laws—Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Stodden, Jones, and Chang 2002; Wolanin and Steele 2004). Postsecondary students with disabilities are not entitled to a free appropriate public education, as in high school, nor is there a mandatory Individualized Education Program (IEP) process to identify and provide for the supports they may need to succeed in school (Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education 2007). In high school, IDEA places “the burden on the school to find and serve the student with an IEP. In higher education the burden is on the student, not the school, to find the appropriate services and navigate through higher education” (Wolanin and Steele 2004, p. 27).

This understanding of the challenges posed by the postsecondary school environment for youth with disabilities raises the following questions:

- To what extent do youth with disabilities enroll in postsecondary schools?
- How does their level of enrollment compare with that of their peers in the general population?
- What are the experiences of those enrolled in postsecondary schools, including the intensity of their enrollment and their course of study?
- To what extent do those who enroll receive supports and accommodations as part of their postsecondary education?
- What are the completion rates for students who enroll in postsecondary schools?

This chapter examines the postsecondary education experiences of youth with disabilities who have been out of secondary school up to 4 years. It focuses on participation in three types of institutions: 2-year or community colleges; postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools; and 4-year colleges. The chapter begins with an examination of postsecondary education enrollment rates¹ and continues with findings regarding the experiences of postsecondary students with disabilities, including their courses of study, receipt of accommodations and modifications, and rates of completion. These findings are presented for youth with disabilities as a whole and for those who differ in length of time out of high school, high school completion status, disability category, age, gender, household income, and race/ethnicity.

Postsecondary School Enrollment

Ensuring that students with disabilities have “access to and full participation in postsecondary education” has been identified as one of the key challenges in the future of secondary education and transition for such students (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition 2003, p. 1). Postsecondary education has been linked to increased earning potential for youth who continue their education after high school, even for those who have not earned a degree (Marcotte et al. 2005).

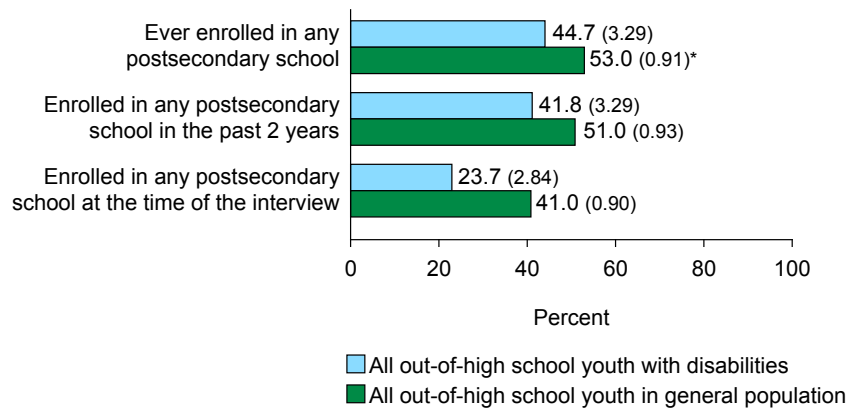
For youth in the general population, “postsecondary enrollments are at an all-time high” (Ewell and Wellman 2007, p. 2). For youth with disabilities, 45 percent were reported to have continued on to postsecondary education within 4 years of leaving high school² (figure 1). The rate of postsecondary school enrollment for youth in the general population was higher than that of youth with disabilities, with 53 percent of similar-age youth in the general population³ ever having attended postsecondary school ($p < .001$).

¹ Postsecondary education enrollment rates of youth with disabilities represented in NLTS2 are not compared with those reported for the original NLTS because age differences in the two samples make straightforward comparisons misleading.

² Respondents were asked, “Since leaving high school have you taken any classes from a [postsecondary school]?”

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2001 youth survey, responses for 17- to 21-year-olds.

Figure 1. Postsecondary school enrollment of youth with disabilities and youth in the general population



* $p < .001$ for difference between youth with disabilities and youth in the general population.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 2,650 youth for ever enrolled and 2,620 youth for enrolled in the past 2 years and for currently enrolled in postsecondary school.

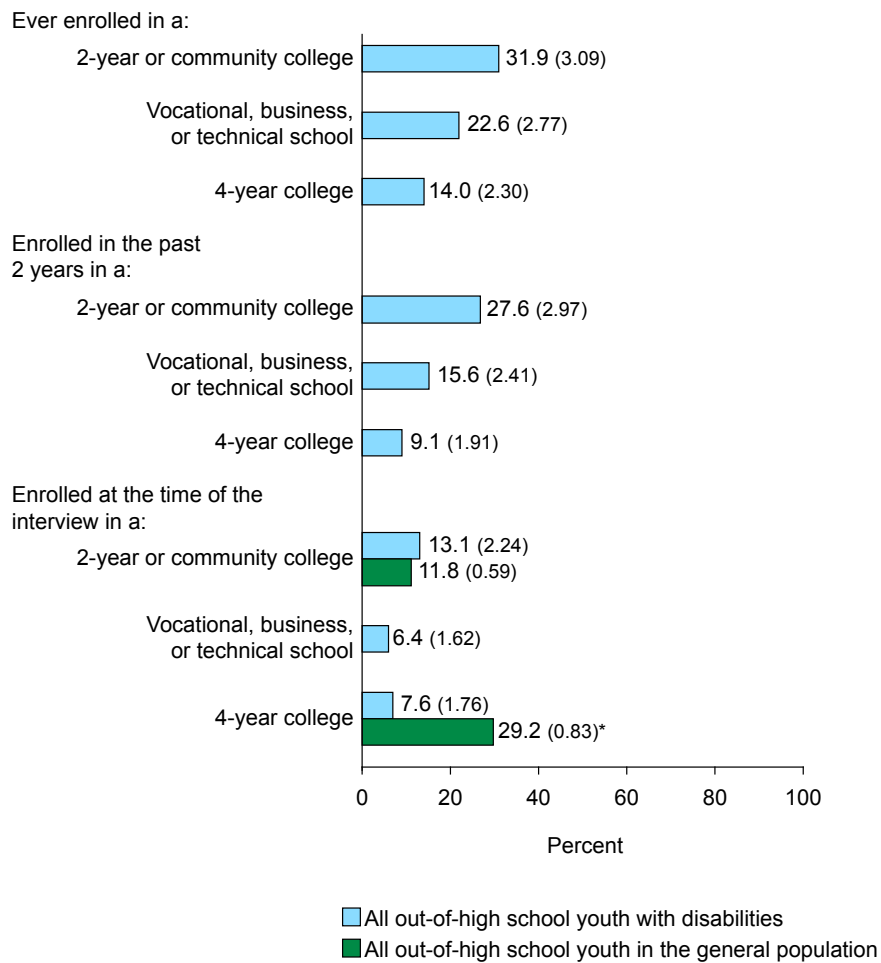
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2001 youth survey, responses for 17- to 21-year-olds.

Forty-two percent of youth with disabilities out of high school up to 4 years were reported to have been enrolled in a postsecondary program in the 2 years prior to the interview. Youth in the general population were more likely than youth with disabilities to be enrolled in postsecondary education in the 2 years prior to the interview, as well as at the time of the interview. Approximately half (51 percent) of youth in the general population had been enrolled in college in the 2 years prior to the interview (vs. 42 percent, $p < .01$). At the time of the interview, 41 percent of youth in the general population were enrolled in a postsecondary program, compared with 24 percent of those with disabilities⁴ ($p < .001$).

Rates of enrollment varied by type of postsecondary program. More youth with disabilities were reported to have ever enrolled in 2-year or community colleges (32 percent) than in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools (23 percent, $p < .001$) or 4-year colleges or universities (14 percent, $p < .001$; figure 2). Youth also were more likely to continue their education at a postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school than at a 4-year college ($p < .01$).

⁴ Respondents were asked, “Are you going to a [postsecondary school] now?” Those who had been enrolled in a postsecondary school but were not currently enrolled, were asked, “Are you not going to a [postsecondary school] now because you: are on school vacation, graduated or completed the program, or some other reason?” Respondents who were on school vacation were recoded as being currently enrolled in postsecondary school.

Figure 2. Postsecondary school enrollment of youth with disabilities and youth in the general population, by school type



* $p < .001$ for difference between youth with disabilities and youth in the general population.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,620 to 2,650 youth. General population comparison data only is available for enrollment at the time of the interview and is not available for vocational, business, or technical school enrollment

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2001 youth survey, responses for 17- to 21-year-olds.

The rate of enrollment of youth with disabilities in 2-year or community colleges at the time of the interview was not significantly different from that of their peers in the general population (13 percent and 12 percent). This stands in contrast to differences in enrollment rates at 4-year colleges. Similar-age youth in the general population were almost four times as likely as youth with disabilities to be taking courses at the time of the interview at a 4-year college (29 percent vs. 8 percent, $p < .001$).

Disability Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment

Enrollment in postsecondary programs varied widely by disability category (table 2). Postsecondary attendance since high school ranged from 27 percent to 78 percent. Seventy-eight percent of youth with visual impairments and 72 percent of those with hearing impairments were reported to have ever attended a postsecondary program. More than half of those with autism (58 percent); speech/language (55 percent), or other health impairments (55 percent), deaf-blindness (55 percent); orthopedic impairments (54 percent); or traumatic brain injury (52 percent) were reported to have continued their education after high school. Approximately 3 in 10 youth with emotional disturbances (34 percent) or multiple disabilities (35 percent) and one-quarter of those with mental retardation (27 percent) participated in postsecondary programs.

Youth with visual or hearing impairments were more likely to attend postsecondary school than were those in several other disability categories. Seventy-eight percent of youth with visual impairments and 72 percent of those with hearing impairments had ever attended a postsecondary program, compared with 27 percent of youth with mental retardation ($p < .001$ for both comparisons), 34 percent of youth with emotional disturbances ($p < .001$ for both comparisons), 35 percent of youth with multiple disabilities ($p < .001$ for both comparisons), 47 percent of youth with learning disabilities ($p < .001$ and $p < .01$, respectively), 54 percent of youth with orthopedic impairments ($p < .01$ in comparison with visual impairment), and 55 percent of youth with speech/language or other health impairments ($p < .01$ in comparison with visual impairment for both disability categories).

Youth in several disability categories were more likely to have ever enrolled in a postsecondary program than were those with emotional disturbances, specifically, youth with speech/language ($p < .01$), hearing ($p < .001$), visual ($p < .001$), orthopedic ($p < .01$), or other health impairments ($p < .01$). Similarly, postsecondary enrollment was higher for youth in several categories than for those with mental retardation, including learning disabilities ($p < .01$); speech/language ($p < .001$), hearing ($p < .001$), visual ($p < .001$), orthopedic ($p < .001$), or other health impairments ($p < .001$); or autism ($p < .01$).

Table 2. Postsecondary school enrollment since leaving high school, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
	Percent											
Any postsecondary school	47.3 (4.95)	54.6 (5.24)	27.4 (5.10)	34.0 (4.79)	71.8 (5.60)	77.8 (7.06)	53.7 (5.88)	54.7 (5.02)	57.5 (8.98)	51.5 (10.82)	35.2 (8.25)	54.6 (11.01)
2-year or community college	34.7 (4.72)	30.5 (4.83)	20.0 (4.58)	20.6 (4.10)	45.7 (6.23)	56.3 (8.48)	40.3 (5.79)	43.2 (5.01)	37.8 (8.81)	29.2 (9.84)	17.9 (6.63)	31.3 (10.25)
Vocational, business, or technical school	22.1 (4.11)	22.8 (4.41)	20.8 (4.64)	23.2 (4.27)	31.5 (5.78)	12.0 (5.52)	18.7 (4.60)	31.9 (4.70)	26.7 (8.04)	31.8 (10.08)	15.6 (6.27)	23.3 (9.35)
4-year college	15.9 (3.62)	26.1 (4.62)	4.6 (2.39)	5.5 (2.31)	30.8 (5.75)	43.8 (8.43)	22.3 (4.91)	13.2 (3.42)	22.3 (7.56)	6.7 (5.41)	10.4 (5.28)	29.0 (10.03)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Consistent with the pattern for overall enrollment, youth with hearing or visual impairments were more likely to have attended 2-year or community colleges (46 percent and 56 percent) and 4-year colleges or universities (31 percent and 44 percent), compared with those in several other disability categories, including mental retardation (20 percent and 5 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons), multiple disabilities (18 percent and 10 percent, $p < .01$ for comparisons with hearing impairments and $p < .001$ for comparisons with visual impairments), emotional disturbances (21 percent and 6 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons), traumatic brain injuries (7 percent at a 4-year college; $p < .01$ for comparison with hearing impairments and $p < .001$ for comparison with visual impairments) or other health impairments (13 percent at a 4-year college; $p < .01$ for comparison with hearing impairments and $p < .001$ for comparison with visual impairments).

Students with speech/language impairments were more likely to be enrolled in a 4-year college than were those with mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or traumatic brain injuries ($p < .01$ for comparison with traumatic brain injury, $p < .001$ for other comparisons).

In contrast to enrollment at other types of postsecondary schools, enrollment at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools did not differ significantly across disability categories.

Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Secondary school completers were more likely to be reported to have enrolled in postsecondary school than were high school noncompleters (table 3). High school completers were approximately three times as likely as noncompleters to continue on to postsecondary education, with 51 percent of completers having attended postsecondary school since leaving high school up to 4 years earlier, compared with 17 percent of noncompleters ($p < .001$).

Table 3. Postsecondary school enrollment since leaving high school, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 1 year	1 up to 2 years	2 up to 4 years
	Percent				
Any postsecondary school	50.8 (3.79)	16.6 (5.75)	31.0 (4.96)	62.5 (5.52)	65.4 (6.14)
2-year or community college	38.6 (3.69)	4.0 (3.06)	20.5 (4.36)	28.4 (5.58)	46.4 (5.69)
Vocational, business, or technical school	22.9 (3.18)	14.2 (5.39)	17.5 (4.08)	21.7 (5.09)	28.8 (5.17)
4-year college	17.5 (2.88)	0.4 (0.97)	14.6 (3.79)	11.2 (3.89)	15.2 (4.10)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Differences between high school completers and noncompleters were apparent for enrollment across the various types of postsecondary programs. Completers were more likely than noncompleters to have ever been enrolled in 2-year or community colleges (39 percent vs. 4 percent, $p < .001$), vocational, business, or technical schools (23 percent vs. 14 percent, $p < .01$), and 4-year colleges (18 percent vs. less than 1 percent, $p < .001$).

The likelihood of ever having been enrolled in postsecondary education increased as youth were out of high school longer. Thirty-one percent of those out of high school up to 1 year had been enrolled in postsecondary school at some point, compared with 63 percent of those out of high school 1 to 2 years and 65 percent of those out of high school 2 to 4 years ($p < .001$ for both comparisons).

Youth with disabilities who were out of high school 2 to 4 years were more likely to ever have been enrolled in a 2-year college (46 percent) than were those out of high school less than 1 year (21 percent, $p < .001$). However, all rates of enrollment in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools or in 4-year colleges did not differ significantly by length of time out of high school.

Demographic Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment

As other studies have found for youth in the general population (e.g., Corak, Lipps, and Zhao 2005), household income is related to the likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary school (table 4). Youth with disabilities from households with incomes of more than \$50,000 were almost twice as likely as those with household incomes of \$25,000 or less ever to have been enrolled in postsecondary education (57 percent vs. 30 percent, $p < .001$).

Family income differences were apparent in enrollment at 2-year colleges. Youth from wealthier households (those with incomes of more than \$50,000) were more likely than those from lower-income households (\$25,000 or less) to have ever enrolled in a 2-year college (40 percent vs. 22 percent, $p < .01$). In contrast, household income was not significantly related to enrollment in vocational, business, or technical schools or 4-year colleges.

Table 4. Postsecondary school enrollment since leaving high school, by household income, race/ethnicity, and gender

	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	Race/Ethnicity			Male	Female
				White	African American	Hispanic		
Percent								
Any postsecondary school	29.9 (5.29)	46.0 (6.75)	56.7 (5.15)	45.9 (4.05)	45.2 (6.93)	39.3 (10.40)	42.9 (4.05)	48.9 (5.54)
2-year or community college	22.0 (4.80)	31.6 (6.30)	40.2 (5.09)	32.5 (3.81)	34.3 (6.62)	26.5 (9.47)	29.3 (3.74)	37.6 (5.38)
Vocational, business, or technical school	18.4 (4.47)	30.0 (6.21)	23.4 (4.40)	20.2 (3.26)	28.5 (6.29)	24.6 (9.17)	21.7 (3.38)	24.7 (4.78)
4-year college	8.7 (3.25)	13.2 (4.59)	19.9 (4.15)	15.8 (2.96)	5.3 (3.12)	15.0 (7.61)	15.1 (2.93)	11.3 (3.51)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

In the general population, females had higher 2-year and 4-year college current enrollment rates than males (14 percent vs. 10 percent at 2-year colleges and 33 percent vs. 26 percent at 4-year colleges; $p < .01$ for both comparisons).⁵ In contrast to their peers in the general population, youth with disabilities' postsecondary enrollment did not differ significantly by gender (43 percent for males and 49 percent for females).

Rates of enrollment in postsecondary schools also did not differ significantly by race or ethnicity for youth with disabilities. Thirty-nine percent of Hispanic youth, 45 percent of African American youth, and 46 percent of White youth had ever enrolled in a postsecondary program.

Postsecondary School Experiences

The findings reported thus far indicate that youth differed in their rates of enrollment in postsecondary programs; those who were enrolled also differed in aspects of their schooling. This section shifts the focus from youth enrollment in postsecondary schools to the experiences of those who had enrolled in these types of programs, examining students' experiences related to timing and intensity of enrollment, postsecondary course taking, accommodations and supports, and completion rates.⁶

Timing and Intensity of Enrollment

Most students with disabilities who continued on to postsecondary school did so within a few months of leaving high school.⁷ On average, approximately 5 months elapsed between a student's leaving high school and enrolling in a postsecondary program. More than one-third (37 percent) were reported to have enrolled in a postsecondary school within 2 months of leaving high school, 45 percent enrolled within 2.1 to 6 months, 14 percent enrolled within 6.1 to 12 months, and 4 percent waited longer than 1 year before continuing their education.

On average, students waited 5 months to enroll in 2-year colleges, 7 months for vocational, business, or technical schools, and 3 months for 4-year institutions. Students enrolled in 4-year colleges sooner after high school than they did in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools ($p < .01$). Other differences in the length of time elapsing between high school and postsecondary school by type of postsecondary school were not significant.

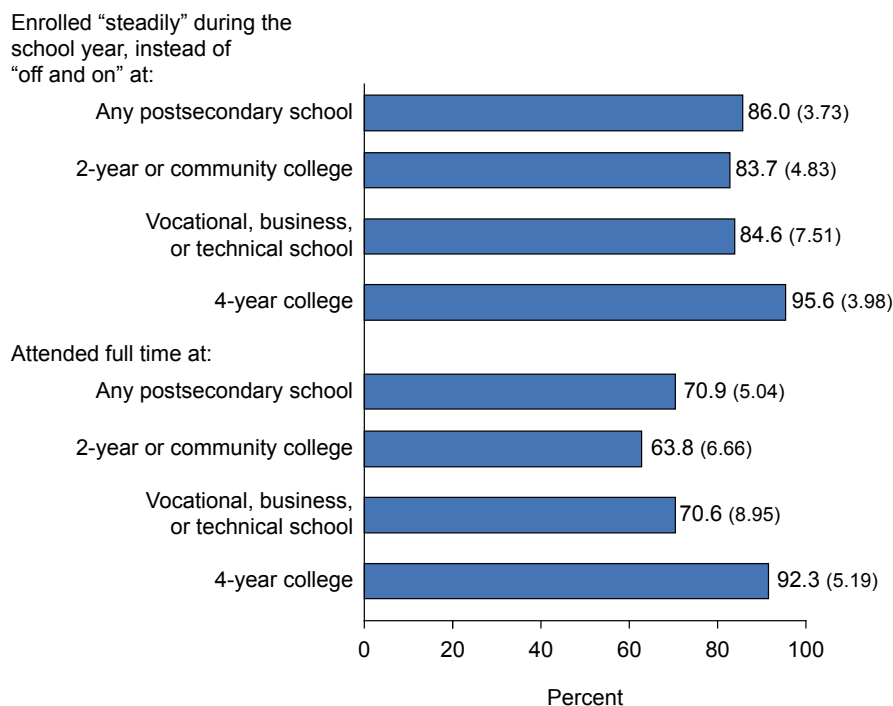
⁵ Calculated for out-of-high-school 17- to 21-year-olds from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), 2001.

⁶ Because of the relatively small percentage of youth enrolled in postsecondary schools, Wave 2 data also were used to augment data for variables related to the postsecondary education experiences of students who had been enrolled in these types of schools. Variables included those related to timing and intensity of enrollment, course of study, receipt of accommodations and supports, and postsecondary school completion. Including Wave 2 data increased the sample size, enabling broader analyses of these variables, particularly analyses by disability category. For these variables, those youth who did not have Wave 3 data but who were out of high school in Wave 2 and had Wave 2 data, these data were combined with the responses of postsecondary attendees in Wave 3. Wave 3 data account for 86 percent to 97 percent of the variables related to postsecondary experiences, with a mean of 89 percent variables.

⁷ Respondents were asked, "About how long after leaving high school was it before you started going to a [postsecondary school]?"

Eighty-six percent of students with disabilities who were enrolled in postsecondary school were reported to have enrolled on a steady basis,⁸ whereas 14 percent took classes some semesters or quarters but not others (figure 3). Eighty-four percent of students at 2-year colleges or at vocational, business, or technical schools and 96 percent of those at 4-year institutions were enrolled steadily during the school year.

Figure 3. Intensity of enrollment in postsecondary schools by youth with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 320 to 1,100 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Similarly, postsecondary school was a full-time commitment for many youth with disabilities.⁹ A report on community college student engagement suggests that full-time students were more likely to interact with faculty, academic advisors, or other students, than were their part-time peers (Inside Higher Ed 2006). Seventy-one percent of postsecondary students with disabilities were reported to have attended school full time, whereas 29 percent were reported to have been part-time students. Students at 4-year colleges were more likely to attend school full time (92 percent) than were those at 2-year colleges (64 percent, $p < .001$).

⁸ Respondents were asked, "Have you been enrolled steadily during the school year or have you been enrolled off and on, taking classes some semesters or quarters but not others?"

⁹ Respondents were asked, "Are you going to a [postsecondary school] full time or part time?" If they asked, respondents were told that full time means taking a full course load of 12 credits or more at a time.

Disability Differences in Timing and Intensity of Enrollment

Disability differences in all aspects of enrollment intensity were not statistically significant. The length of time between leaving high school and beginning a postsecondary program ranged, on average, from 4 months for students with autism to 6 months for those with emotional disturbance (table 5). The rate of consistent enrollment in a school year varied from 75 percent of students with mental retardation to 91 percent of students with autism. Attending a postsecondary school on a full-time basis ranged from 49 percent of students with traumatic brain injuries to 85 percent of those with speech/language impairments.

Table 5. Intensity of enrollment of those ever enrolled in a postsecondary program, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
Number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	4.8 (0.87)	5.3 (1.63)	5.4 (2.60)	6.4 (1.98)	3.8 (0.91)	5.7 (1.98)	4.3 (0.90)	4.5 (0.85)	4.0 (1.06)	‡	4.1 (1.26)	‡
Percentage enrolled "steadily" during the school year instead of "off and on"	87.5 (5.07)	89.5 (5.02)	75.4 (12.90)	83.4 (6.91)	88.0 (5.89)	89.6 (6.69)	87.2 (4.97)	81.4 (5.80)	91.2 (6.87)	91.2 (9.95)	89.0 (10.69)	‡
Percentage enrolled full time (greater than or equal to 12 credit hours)	70.6 (7.09)	85.1 (5.76)	69.2 (13.22)	66.0 (8.81)	78.9 (7.32)	83.8 (8.18)	76.0 (6.35)	72.0 (6.70)	59.8 (11.74)	49.1 (17.12)	50.7 (15.09)	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,080 to 1,170 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Differences in Timing and Intensity of Enrollment by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Timing and intensity of enrollment in postsecondary school did not differ significantly by high school-leaving status or length of time out of secondary school (table 6).

Table 6. Intensity of enrollment of those ever enrolled in a postsecondary program, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 1 year	1 up to 2 years	2 up to 4 years
Number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	4.7 (0.67)	9.6 (4.41)	4.7 (0.87)	5.8 (1.56)	4.4 (0.93)
Percentage enrolled "steadily" during the school year instead of "off and on"	87.5 (3.68)	75.5 (29.54)	94.5 (3.97)	83.4 (7.84)	83.1 (6.43)
Percentage enrolled full time (greater than or equal to 12 credit hours)	73.7 (5.09)	23.9 (26.59)	75.6 (7.21)	62.4 (10.09)	73.0 (8.06)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Demographic Differences in Timing and Intensity of Enrollment

The length of time between leaving high school and beginning postsecondary school and the intensity of enrollment in postsecondary programs did not differ significantly by students' demographic characteristics (table 7).

Table 7. Intensity of enrollment of those ever enrolled in a postsecondary program, by household income, race/ethnicity, and gender

	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African American	Hispanic	Male	Female
Number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	6.7 (1.89)	4.8 (1.38)	4.6 (0.77)	4.4 (0.85)	5.3 (1.29)	8.2 (2.44)	4.7 (0.87)	5.4 (1.16)
Percentage enrolled "steadily" during the school year instead of "off and on"	82.0 (8.69)	87.4 (7.02)	87.7 (4.98)	87.8 (4.25)	91.5 (6.90)	63.9 (17.26)	84.1 (4.93)	89.9 (5.47)
Percentage enrolled full time (greater than or equal to 12 credit hours)	62.5 (10.66)	73.2 (10.99)	72.3 (6.74)	69.6 (6.25)	76.7 (10.29)	62.8 (16.92)	72.6 (6.32)	67.8 (8.30)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

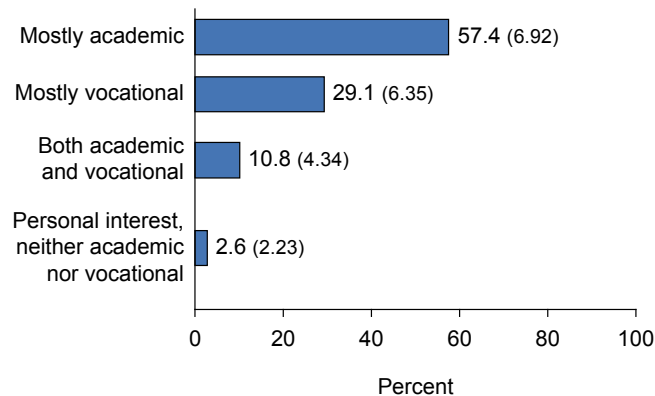
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Postsecondary Course of Study¹⁰

Postsecondary schools frequently offer a wide range of instructional program options. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics' Classification of Instructional Programs taxonomy describes more than 60 major postsecondary fields of study, not including hundreds of intermediate and specific instructional program subcategories (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2002). With this range of options, students with disabilities varied in the types of courses they took while in postsecondary school.

Postsecondary students who attended 2-year colleges were more likely to be enrolled in an academic than a vocational course of study, with 57 percent majoring in academic areas and 29 percent in vocational areas ($p < .01$; figure 4).¹¹ Eleven percent reported both an academic and vocational focus, and 3 percent attended classes primarily for recreation and personal interest.

Figure 4. Primary focus of courses taken at a 2-year or community college by youth with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 670 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Students who had a primarily vocational focus at 2-year colleges and students who attended postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools were enrolled in a range of vocational majors.¹² Thirteen percent of these students were training for careers in skilled crafts (e.g., plumbing, carpentry) or mechanics, and approximately 11 percent were majoring in each of the

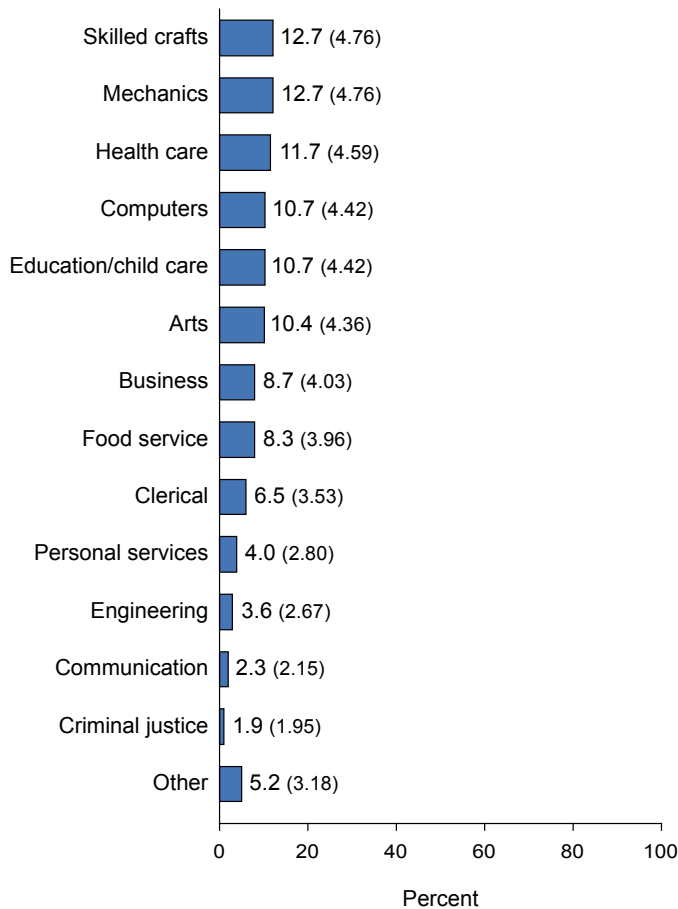
¹⁰ Course of study was analyzed separately for students with a vocational focus at 2-year colleges and postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools and for students at 4-year colleges. An across-postsecondary-school examination of students' majors was not possible because interview questions related to differed by type of postsecondary program (see footnotes 11 and 12 for item wording). With the need to focus separately on course-taking experiences at the various types of schools, sample size did not support analysis of course of study by disability, school leaving, or demographic characteristics.

¹¹ Respondents at 2-year colleges were asked, "Have you taken mostly vocational courses to train for a job, like computer or business courses, or have you taken mostly academic courses, like English or science?"

¹² Respondents at 2-year colleges who had a primarily vocational focus and respondents at vocational, business, or technical schools were asked, "What kind of job are you training for?"

areas of health care, computers, education or child care, or the arts (including graphic design; figure 5). Approximately 8 percent were focused on careers related to each of the areas of food service or business, 7 percent on clerical opportunities, and less than 5 percent were taking coursework for careers in each of the areas of personal services, engineering, communication, or criminal justice.

Figure 5. Vocational course of study of students with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school who had a vocational focus at a 2-year or community college and students at vocational, business, or technical schools



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 480 youth.

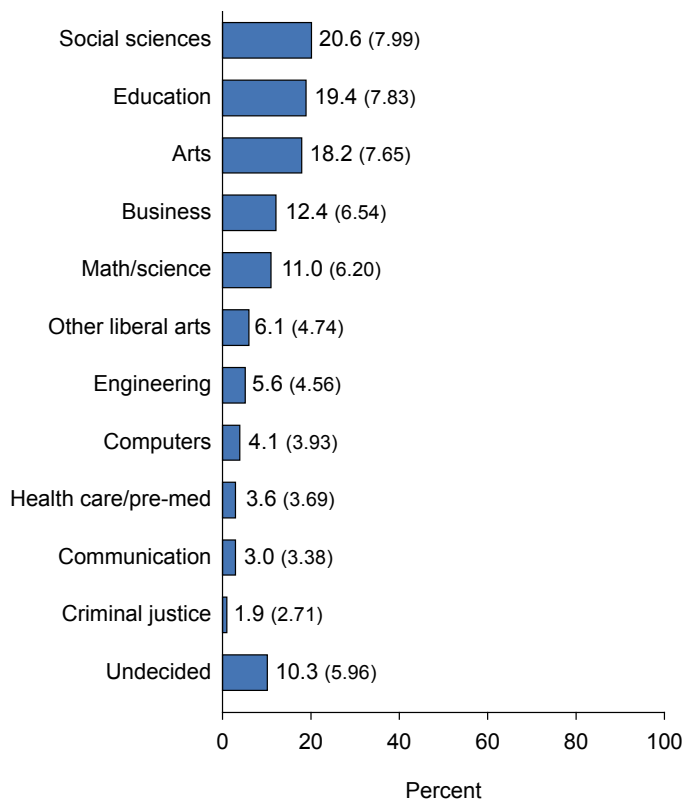
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Students with disabilities at 4-year colleges also focused on a broad range of majors.¹³ Social sciences (20 percent), education (19 percent), arts (18 percent), and business (12 percent) were popular courses of study (figure 6). In the general population, business, education, social sciences, psychology, and visual and performing arts also were prevalent majors, accounting for 51 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded in 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2007).

¹³ Respondents at 4-year colleges were asked, "What is your major or your primary course of study?"

Eleven percent of students with disabilities were enrolled with a math or science major, 6 percent were majoring in engineering or other liberal arts, and less than 5 percent were majoring in each of the areas of computers, health care, communication, or criminal justice. Ten percent had not yet chosen a major and were undecided in their area of focus.

Figure 6. Primary course of study of youth with disabilities ever enrolled in a 4-year college or university



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 360 youth.

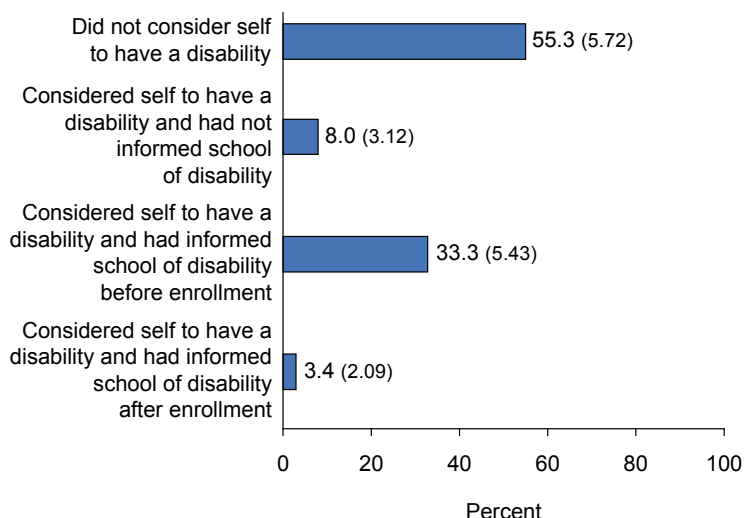
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Accommodations and Supports

Receiving appropriate supports and accommodations in postsecondary programs has been shown to be related to school success and retention for students with disabilities (Mull, Sitlington, and Alper 2001; Pierangelo and Crane 1997; Stodden and Dowrick 2000; Stodden, Jones, and Chang 2002). Although a college is required to provide “appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability” (Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education 2007, p. 2), accommodations that are a fundamental alteration of a program or that would impose an undue financial or administrative burden are not mandatory (Wolanin and Steele 2004). Schools interpret these guidelines differently, and the types and extent of supports and accommodations available to students with disabilities vary widely (National Center for Education Statistics 1999; Stodden, Jones, and Chang 2002).

As noted earlier, when students leave secondary school and enter postsecondary institutions, the responsibility for arranging for accommodations and supports shifts from the school to the students. At the postsecondary level, students with disabilities are expected to advocate for themselves (Stodden, Jones, and Chang 2002). “To receive accommodations, students with disabilities must disclose their disabilities and take the initiative in requesting accommodations” (Wolanin and Steele 2004, p. ix). However, disclosure of a disability is voluntary. NLTS2 findings show that more than half (55 percent) of postsecondary students who were identified by their secondary school as having a disability did not consider themselves to have a disability by the time they had transitioned to postsecondary school (figure 7).¹⁴ An additional 8 percent reported considering themselves to have a disability but chose not to disclose it to their postsecondary schools. Approximately one-third of postsecondary students with disabilities identified themselves as having a disability and had informed their postsecondary schools of their disability prior to enrollment, and 3 percent considered themselves to have a disability and had waited to inform the schools of their disability until after enrollment in the postsecondary institutions.¹⁵

Figure 7. Extent to which students with disabilities ever enrolled in a postsecondary school considered themselves as having a disability and informed postsecondary schools of disability



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,040 youth.

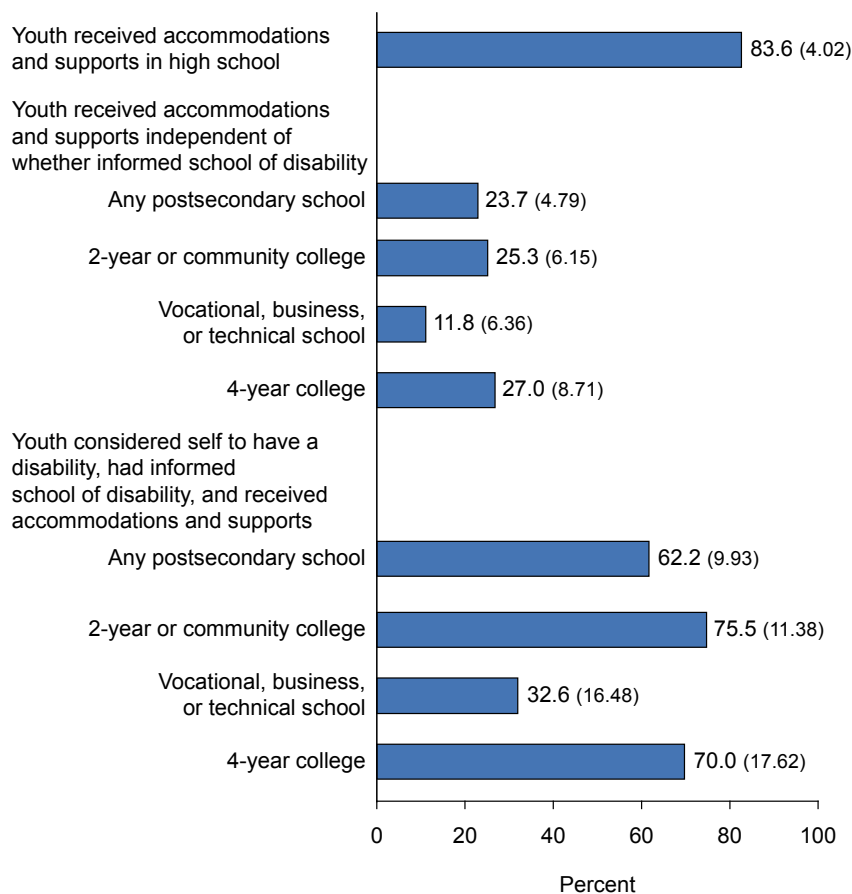
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

¹⁴ Youth respondents were asked, “Some people have a disability or special need that makes it hard for them to do some things. Do you consider yourself to have any kind of disability or special need?”

¹⁵ Youth respondents who asserted they had a disability were asked, “Was this school aware that you have a disability or special need before you enrolled there, after you enrolled, or is the school not aware of your disability or special need?”

To receive accommodations or supports from a postsecondary school because of a disability, students first must disclose a disability to their school. Approximately 37 percent of postsecondary students who were considered by their secondary schools as having a disability disclosed a disability to their postsecondary schools. Less than one-quarter (24 percent) of postsecondary students who were identified as having a disability by their secondary schools were reported to have received any accommodations or supports because of their disability from their postsecondary schools (figure 8).¹⁶

Figure 8. Receipt of accommodations and supports from school because of disability by youth with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 140 to 1,100 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 1 school program survey, 2002, and Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

¹⁶ Respondents were asked, “Have you received any services, accommodations, or other help from the school to help you do your best there, like a note taker or more time to take tests because of a learning problem, disability, or other special need?”

In contrast, when these postsecondary students were in high school, more than three times as many (84 percent) received some type of accommodation or support because of a disability ($p < .001$).¹⁷ This pattern of less disability-related assistance at the postsecondary than the secondary level was consistent across the various types of postsecondary schools. Twenty-five percent of 2-year college students, 12 percent of postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school students, and 27 percent of 4-year college students received assistance from their schools because of their disability ($p < .001$ for all comparisons with rate in high school).

Restricting responses to the 37 percent of students who had disclosed a disability to their postsecondary programs, 62 percent were reported to have received accommodations and supports from their postsecondary programs. Although students with disabilities who had disclosed a disability were more likely than postsecondary students with disabilities as a whole to receive accommodations and supports ($p < .001$), they remained less likely to receive this type of help from their postsecondary schools than from their high schools (62 percent vs. 92 percent, $p < .01$).¹⁸

The rate of receiving accommodations and supports in postsecondary schools for those who had disclosed a disability ranged from 33 percent at vocational, business, or technical schools to 70 percent at 4-year colleges or universities and 76 percent at 2-year or community colleges (not significant differences, possibly in part because of the large standard errors). Of those who considered themselves to have a disability and had not received accommodations or supports related to their disability from their postsecondary schools, 20 percent had applied for this type of assistance.

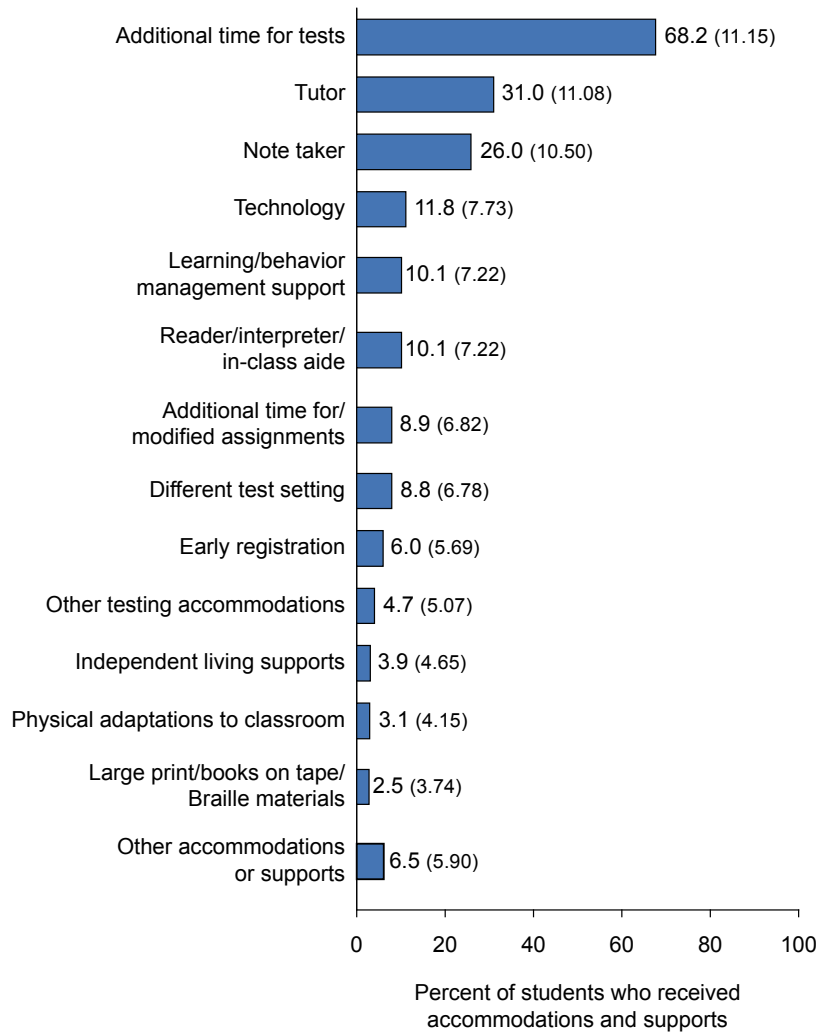
Postsecondary students who were given assistance because of their disability were reported to have received a range of accommodations, supports, and services from their schools.¹⁹ Additional time to complete tests was a frequent type of assistance—received by approximately two-thirds (68 percent) of those who got accommodations, supports, and services (figure 9). Tests were administered in a different-than-usual setting for 9 percent, and 5 percent were provided with other testing accommodations. One-third (31 percent) had tutors, and 26 percent received help from note takers. Approximately 10 percent used technology aids, such as computer software designed for students with disabilities; received learning strategies, study skills, or behavior management support; or received help from a reader, interpreter, or in-class aide. Assignments were modified or deadlines were extended for 9 percent of postsecondary students who received some type of assistance. Other, less frequently occurring types of help included early registration, independent-living supports, physical adaptations to classrooms, and large print or Braille materials and books on tape.

¹⁷ Source for high school accommodations and supports: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 1 school program survey, 2002; responses restricted to those who ever had been enrolled in postsecondary school.

¹⁸ Source for high school accommodations and supports: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 1 school program survey, 2002; responses restricted to those who ever had been enrolled in postsecondary schools and had disclosed a disability to their postsecondary schools.

¹⁹ Respondents who indicated that they received help from their school because of a disability were asked, “What services, accommodations, or other help have you received?”

Figure 9. Types of accommodations and supports received from postsecondary schools by students with disabilities ever enrolled in a postsecondary school and had received these types of assistance



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 420 youth.

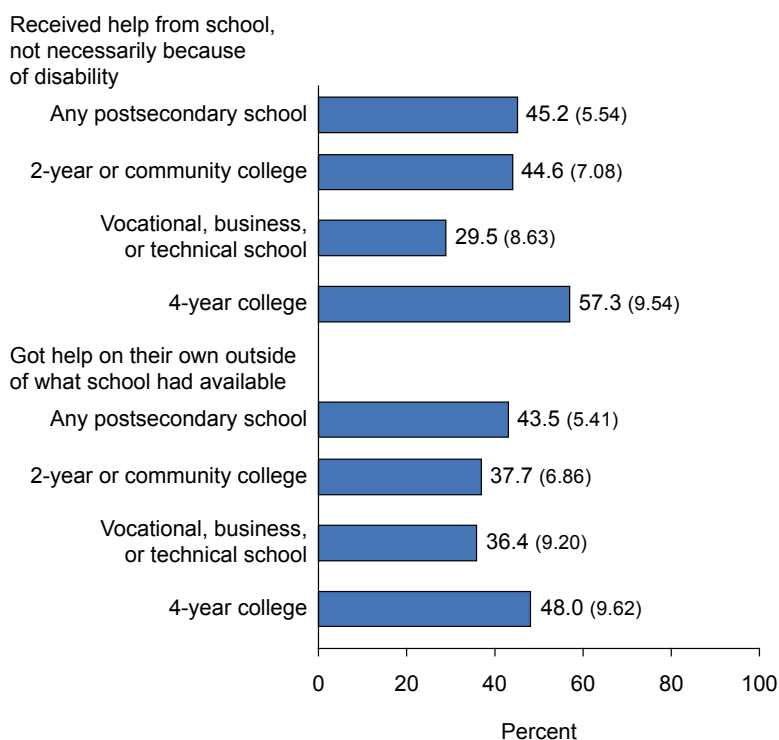
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

With the exception of early registration and independent-living supports, the types of accommodations received by students in postsecondary schools paralleled those provided during high school. Consistent with experiences in high school general education courses, testing modifications also were frequently received by students with disabilities in postsecondary school. For example, 75 percent were given more time to complete tests in high school (Newman, Marder, and Wagner 2003), and two-thirds of postsecondary students who received accommodations got additional time for tests. In contrast, students were much less likely in

postsecondary school than in high school to receive additional time for or modifications to assignments (8 percent vs. 86 percent, $p < .001$).²⁰

Postsecondary students received help beyond the support provided by schools because of their disability. When students were asked whether they had received help with their schoolwork from their postsecondary schools—whether or not the assistance was related to their disability—45 percent had received some type of help, including tutoring and study center assistance (figure 10).²¹ Rates of receiving assistance with schoolwork ranged from 30 percent for those at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools to 57 percent for those at 4-year colleges or universities (not significant differences).

Figure 10. Receipt of help with schoolwork by postsecondary students with disabilities who had ever enrolled in a postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 340 to 1,080 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

²⁰ Source for high school accommodations: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 1 general education teacher survey (2002). See Newman, Marder, and Wagner (2003) for discussion of accommodations received in general education classes in high school.

²¹ Respondents were asked, “Did you ever get help with school work from this school, like going to a tutor or a study center or writing center?”

Some students also sought help on their own outside of what their postsecondary schools provided.²² More than two in five (44 percent) had gotten help on their own. Almost half of 4-year college students (48 percent) were reported to have received help with their schoolwork beyond that provided by their schools, as were 36 percent of postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school students and 38 percent of community college students.

When postsecondary students who had received any type of help with their schoolwork—accommodations or supports from the schools independent of a disability or because of a disability, or help outside of what the schools provided—were asked to rate how useful those supports were in helping them stay in school and do their best,²³ 41 percent reported that the supports were “somewhat useful,” and 49 percent rated them as “very useful” (figure 11). One in 10 felt they were “not very” or “not at all useful” ($p < .001$ for comparisons with “somewhat” and “very useful”). Students’ ratings of their schoolwork assistance as “very useful” ranged from 42 percent at 4-year colleges to 63 percent at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools (not significant differences).

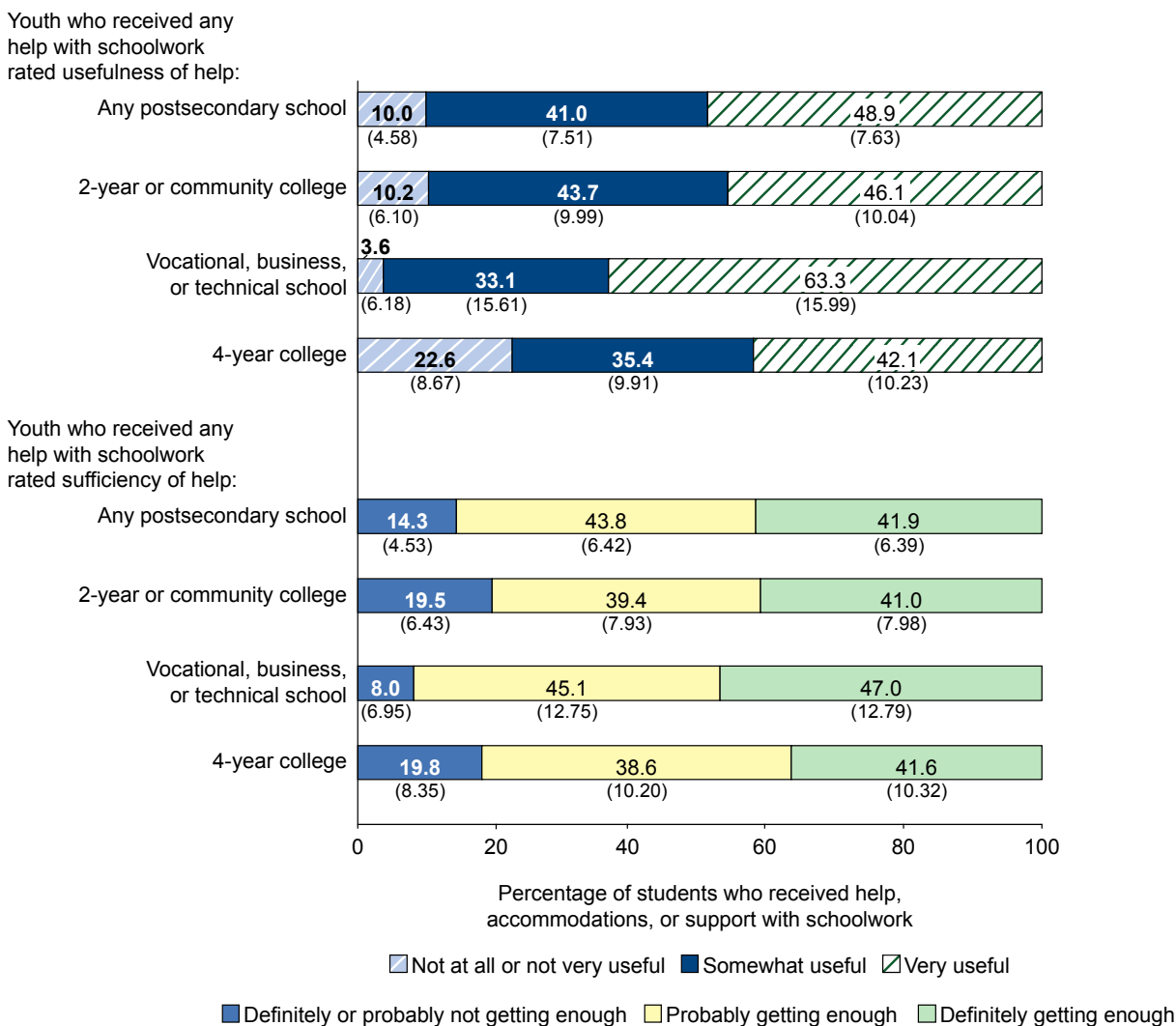
Students who had received assistance also were asked whether they thought they were receiving enough help to do their best at school.²⁴ Forty-four percent reported they “probably” were, and 42 percent reported they “definitely” were getting enough assistance, while 14 percent reported they “probably” or “definitely” were not getting enough help ($p < .001$ for comparisons with “probably” and “definitely” get enough assistance). Forty-one percent of students with disabilities at 2-year colleges, 42 percent of those at 4-year colleges or universities, and 47 percent of those at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools stated they were “definitely getting enough” services, accommodations, or help with schoolwork (not significant differences).

²² Respondents were asked, “Besides what the school had available, have you gotten any services or help on your own to help you do your best at school?”

²³ Youth respondents were asked, “How useful have the services, accommodations, and help with schoolwork been in helping you stay in school and do your best there?” Response categories: “very useful,” “somewhat useful,” “not very useful,” or “not at all useful.”

²⁴ Youth were asked, “Do you think you are getting enough services, accommodations, or help with schoolwork to do your best there?” Response categories: “definitely getting enough,” “probably getting enough,” “probably not getting enough,” or “definitely not getting enough.”

Figure 11. Perceptions of assistance with schoolwork by youth with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school and had received assistance



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Response categories “not at all useful” and “not very useful,” and “probably not getting enough” and “definitely not getting enough,” have been collapsed for reporting purposes. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 160 to 700 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Disability Differences in Disclosure of Disability and Receipt of Accommodations

Students with different disabilities varied widely in the extent to which they identified themselves as an individual with a disability; the rate of not considering themselves to have a disability ranged from 17 percent to 73 percent (table 8). Students with speech/language impairments (73 percent) or emotional disturbances (63 percent) were more likely to have reported not considering themselves as having a disability than were those with visual

impairments (17 percent, $p < .001$ for both comparisons), multiple disabilities (19 percent, $p < .001$ and $p < .01$ respectively), or orthopedic impairments (31 percent, $p < .001$ and $p < .01$ respectively). Students with speech/language impairments also were more likely to have reported not considering themselves as having a disability than were those with hearing impairments (29 percent, $p < .001$) or autism (31 percent, $p < .01$). In addition, students with learning disabilities (57 percent) or other health impairments (57 percent) were more likely than those with visual impairments ($p < .001$ for both comparisons) to view themselves as not having a disability.

Table 8. Extent to which students ever enrolled in a postsecondary school considered themselves as having a disability and informed postsecondary schools of disability, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
	Percent											
Student did not consider self to have a disability	56.7 (8.11)	73.4 (7.24)	40.0 (14.85)	62.7 (9.46)	29.2 (9.54)	17.3 (8.39)	30.6 (7.03)	56.8 (7.43)	30.6 (12.27)	42.8 (17.31)	18.9 (13.21)	‡
Student considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	35.5 (7.83)	18.0 (6.29)	55.6 (15.06)	21.2 (7.99)	64.7 (10.03)	79.0 (9.03)	62.9 (7.37)	38.1 (7.28)	55.1 (13.24)	52.2 (17.47)	78.7 (13.82)	‡
Student considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	7.8 (4.39)	8.6 (4.59)	4.4 (6.22)	16.2 (7.21)	6.2 (5.06)	3.7 (4.19)	6.4 (3.74)	5.1 (3.30)	14.2 (9.29)	5.0 (7.62)	2.4 (5.16)	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. Response categories “student considers self to have a disability and has informed school of disability before enrollment” and “student considers self to have a disability and has informed school of disability after enrollment” have been collapsed for reporting purposes. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,080 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

A similar pattern of disability differences was apparent for those who had informed their postsecondary schools of a disability. Students with visual impairments (79 percent), multiple disabilities (79 percent), or orthopedic impairments (63 percent) were more likely to consider themselves as having a disability and to have disclosed that disability to their postsecondary schools than were those with speech/language impairments (18 percent) or emotional disturbances (21 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons).

Students with visual impairments also were more likely to disclose a disability than were those with learning disabilities (36 percent) or other health impairments (38 percent, $p < .001$ for both comparisons) and those with multiple disabilities were more likely to disclose a disability than were those with learning disabilities ($p < .01$). Students with hearing impairments were more likely to disclose their disability than were those with speech/language impairments or emotional disturbances ($p < .001$ for both comparisons).

Postsecondary students also differed in their rates of receipt of accommodations and supports from their schools. Rates of receiving accommodations or supports because of a disability ranged from 10 percent to 60 percent (table 9). Students in disability categories who were more likely to disclose a disability to their postsecondary schools also were more likely to receive accommodations and supports from their schools because of a disability. Students with multiple disabilities (67 percent), visual impairments (58 percent), or hearing (56 percent) or orthopedic impairments (40 percent) were more likely to receive accommodations or supports because of a disability than were those with speech/language impairments (10 percent; $p < .001$ for all comparisons), emotional disturbances (13 percent; $p < .001$ for all comparisons, with the exception of $p < .01$ for comparisons with orthopedic impairments and multiple disabilities) or other health impairments (19 percent; $p < .001$ for comparison with hearing impairment, $p < .01$ for comparisons with visual and orthopedic impairments, comparison with multiple disabilities significant at $p < .05$).

The rate of receiving help with schoolwork overall—whether or not specifically due to a disability—did not differ across disability categories. Students’ rate of receiving help with schoolwork outside of what was provided by their postsecondary schools also did not differ significantly across disability categories.

Table 9. Receipt of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork by students ever enrolled in a postsecondary school, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
	Percent											
Accommodations and supports received from school because of disability, independent of informing school of disability	23.7 (6.77)	10.1 (4.89)	26.4 (12.79)	13.1 (6.48)	56.1 (9.04)	58.4 (10.84)	40.1 (7.35)	18.8 (5.81)	32.7 (11.47)	46.1 (17.07)	66.5 (15.40)	‡
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	47.4 (7.87)	44.5 (8.11)	43.2 (14.17)	27.9 (8.48)	44.5 (9.14)	50.5 (10.96)	56.0 (7.47)	43.9 (7.35)	40.1 (11.92)	43.6 (16.98)	40.0 (15.09)	‡
Student got help on own	46.0 (7.80)	38.0 (7.92)	36.9 (13.80)	33.2 (9.23)	29.3 (8.37)	63.5 (10.66)	43.9 (7.63)	39.1 (7.38)	32.4 (11.55)	43.5 (13.77)	59.7 (15.36)	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 520 to 1,160 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Students' perceptions of their accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork did not differ significantly by disability category, with the exception that youth with emotional disturbances were more likely than those with speech/language impairments to indicate that they definitely were getting enough services (67 percent vs. 32 percent, $p < .01$; table 10).

Table 10. Perceptions of assistance with schoolwork by youth with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school and had received assistance, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
	Percent											
Youth who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:												
Very useful	44.1 (10.44)	45.0 (10.25)	79.2 (16.96)	59.0 (13.14)	55.6 (11.49)	54.8 (10.77)	55.6 (12.28)	60.5 (9.59)	47.0 (13.99)	29.5 (15.88)	72.2 (15.64)	‡
Somewhat useful	46.1 (10.48)	40.2 (10.10)	8.9 (11.90)	28.6 (12.07)	32.9 (10.87)	32.8 (10.16)	38.7 (12.04)	34.3 (9.31)	38.7 (13.65)	52.4 (17.39)	22.1 (14.48)	‡
Not at all or not very useful	9.8 (6.25)	14.8 (7.32)	11.9 (13.53)	12.4 (8.80)	11.5 (7.38)	12.4 (7.13)	5.7 (5.73)	5.1 (4.32)	14.3 (9.81)	18.1 (13.41)	5.7 (8.09)	‡
Youth who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:												
Definitely getting enough	37.0 (8.72)	32.0 (8.58)	47.8 (19.06)	67.2 (9.71)	52.3 (10.54)	52.8 (10.25)	52.1 (11.21)	54.4 (8.39)	61.4 (13.36)	41.5 (16.85)	54.8 (17.60)	‡
Probably getting enough	47.1 (9.01)	58.5 (9.06)	34.5 (18.14)	25.7 (9.04)	34.6 (10.04)	35.2 (9.81)	37.6 (10.87)	37.4 (8.15)	30.2 (12.60)	51.3 (17.09)	32.9 (16.61)	‡
Probably or definitely not getting enough	15.9 (6.60)	9.4 (5.37)	17.7 (14.56)	7.1 (5.31)	13.1 (7.12)	12.0 (6.68)	10.2 (6.79)	8.2 (4.62)	8.4 (7.61)	7.2 (8.84)	12.3 (11.61)	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. Response categories "not at all useful" and "not very useful" and response categories "probably not getting enough" and "definitely not getting enough" have been collapsed for reporting purposes. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 720 to 900 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Differences in Disclosure of Disability and Receipt of Accommodations by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Self-identification as a student with disabilities, disclosure of a disability to postsecondary schools, receipt of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork from school and on their own, and perceptions of accommodations, supports, and help did not differ significantly by students' high school-leaving characteristics (table 11).

Table 11. Disclosure of disability to postsecondary school and receipt of and perceptions of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork by youth with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 1 year	1 up to 2 years	2 up to 4 years
	Percent				
Student did not consider self to have a disability	57.9 (5.92)	16.7 (23.53)	63.5 (8.01)	51.4 (10.49)	53.1 (9.53)
Student considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	34.9 (5.72)	74.4 (27.53)	32.2 (7.77)	34.6 (9.99)	40.2 (9.36)
Student considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	7.2 (3.10)	8.9 (17.96)	4.2 (3.34)	14.0 (7.28)	6.6 (4.74)
Accommodations and supports received from school because of disability, independent of informing school of disability	24.7 (5.03)	16.3 (24.24)	25.2 (7.43)	13.5 (7.09)	28.7 (8.38)
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	47.9 (5.80)	13.7 (21.26)	49.2 (8.43)	41.2 (10.12)	45.1 (9.15)
Student got help on own	45.6 (5.62)	14.9 (22.56)	48.9 (8.44)	35.0 (9.83)	45.2 (9.09)
Youth who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:					
Very useful	49.0 (7.93)	‡	56.1 (10.75)	58.4 (11.21)	40.2 (13.10)
Somewhat useful	41.1 (7.80)	‡	28.0 (9.73)	30.4 (10.46)	54.2 (13.31)
Not at all or not very useful	9.9 (4.74)	‡	15.9 (7.92)	11.2 (7.17)	5.6 (6.14)
Youth who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:					
Definitely getting enough	42.0 (6.63)	‡	40.1 (9.47)	31.1 (10.32)	48.7 (11.11)
Probably getting enough	43.1 (6.65)	‡	50.1 (9.67)	56.3 (11.06)	33.2 (10.46)
Probably or definitely not getting enough	14.9 (4.78)	‡	9.8 (5.75)	12.6 (7.40)	18.1 (8.56)

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Demographic Differences in Disclosure of Disability and Receipt of Accommodations

Self-identification as a student with disabilities, disclosure of a disability to postsecondary schools, receipt of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork from school and on their own, and perceptions of accommodations, supports, and help did not differ significantly by students' demographic characteristics (table 12).

Table 12. Disclosure of disability to postsecondary school and receipt of and perceptions of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork by youth with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school, by household income, race/ethnicity, and gender

	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	Race/Ethnicity			Male	Female
				White	African American	Hispanic		
Percent								
Student did not consider self to have a disability	54.7 (11.20)	63.5 (12.16)	48.8 (7.88)	47.3 (7.10)	76.4 (10.49)	69.3 (16.59)	55.1 (7.25)	55.8 (9.19)
Student considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	35.7 (10.78)	29.6 (11.53)	42.5 (7.79)	42.3 (7.03)	23.0 (10.40)	24.3 (15.43)	35.7 (6.99)	38.7 (9.02)
Student considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	9.6 (6.63)	7.0 (6.44)	8.8 (4.46)	10.4 (4.34)	0.6 (1.91)	6.4 (8.80)	9.3 (4.23)	5.5 (4.22)
Accommodations and supports received from school because of disability, independent of informing school of disability	20.3 (9.11)	25.4 (10.75)	26.1 (6.74)	26.8 (6.10)	20.2 (9.78)	11.2 (11.63)	25.3 (6.22)	20.8 (7.37)
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	42.5 (10.88)	46.2 (12.19)	49.1 (7.61)	42.9 (6.75)	55.5 (12.08)	46.0 (17.63)	47.9 (7.11)	40.2 (8.70)
Student got help on own	32.9 (10.70)	40.2 (10.12)	47.1 (7.73)	39.7 (6.46)	58.6 (12.01)	45.7 (17.91)	45.4 (6.79)	39.7 (8.91)
Youth who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:								
Very useful	50.0 (17.80)	63.8 (14.40)	47.4 (10.39)	41.7 (9.03)	64.4 (12.81)	72.6 (31.69)	44.8 (10.39)	55.4 (10.75)
Somewhat useful	41.5 (17.54)	31.4 (13.91)	39.1 (10.16)	46.3 (9.13)	31.7 (12.45)	22.5 (29.67)	41.5 (10.30)	40.3 (10.61)
Not at all or not very useful	8.5 (9.93)	4.8 (6.41)	13.5 (7.11)	12.0 (5.95)	3.9 (5.18)	4.9 (15.34)	13.7 (7.18)	4.3 (4.39)
Youth who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:								
Definitely getting enough	41.3 (14.62)	33.7 (11.42)	41.0 (8.94)	40.3 (7.68)	34.1 (11.50)	65.1 (25.75)	42.7 (8.39)	40.6 (9.78)
Probably getting enough	28.9 (13.46)	60.8 (11.80)	46.3 (9.06)	41.5 (7.71)	62.1 (11.77)	24.4 (23.20)	36.8 (8.18)	55.0 (9.90)
Probably or definitely not getting enough	29.8 (13.58)	5.5 (5.51)	12.7 (6.05)	18.2 (6.04)	3.8 (4.64)	10.6 (16.63)	20.5 (6.85)	4.4 (4.08)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

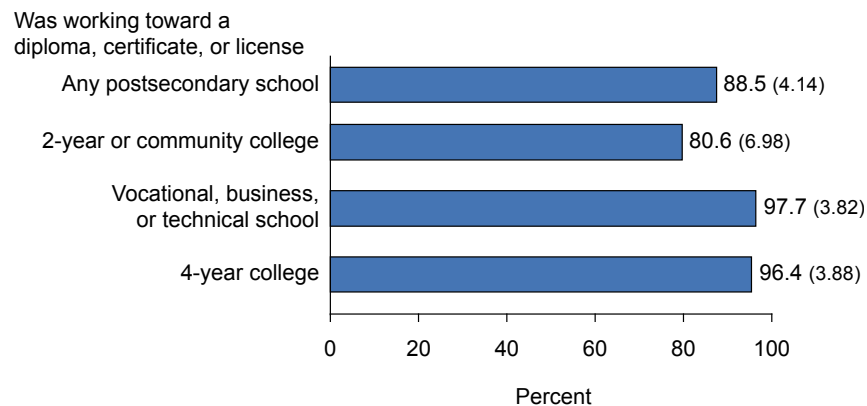
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Postsecondary School Completion

For many students in the general population, postsecondary school enrollment does not result in degree attainment or program completion. Less than two-thirds of students in the general population who began as full-time freshmen in 4-year universities in 1995 had received a bachelor's degree within 6 years (Berkner, He, and Cataldi 2002). The economic benefits associated with college enrollment frequently are not realized by those who begin postsecondary education but fail to graduate. For example, the earning gap between those with a bachelor's degree and those with only a high school diploma has continuously widened over the past 30 years, whereas those who enroll in college but don't graduate "have made only slight gains" (Carey 2004, p. 3).

The majority of students with disabilities who attended postsecondary school envisioned themselves graduating from the institution. Nine out of 10 students with disabilities who were currently enrolled in postsecondary school (89 percent) asserted that they were "working toward a diploma, certificate, or license" (figure 12).²⁵ This percentage ranged from 81 percent of students at 2-year or community colleges to 96 percent of students at 4-year colleges and 98 percent of those at vocational, business, or technical schools (not significant differences).

Figure 12. School completion goal of postsecondary students with disabilities enrolled at the time of the interview



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 180 to 830 youth.

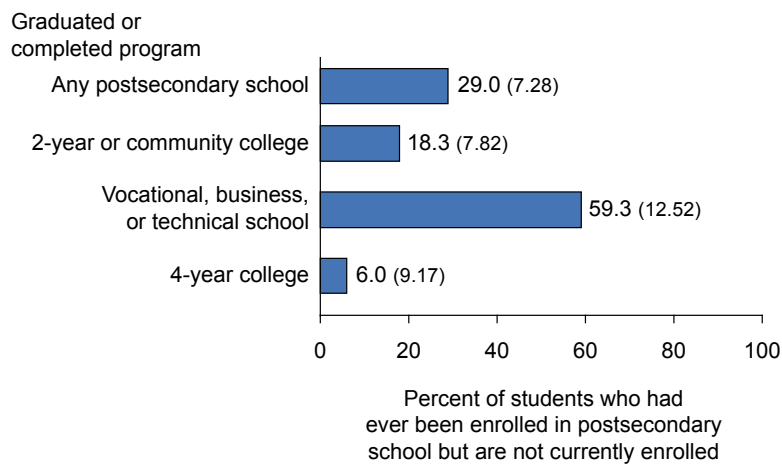
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Despite the 89 percent of students who reported intending to finish their programs, when students left their postsecondary schools few left because they had graduated or completed their programs. Of those who left postsecondary institutions, 29 percent had graduated or completed their programs ($p < .001$ for comparison with working toward diploma; figure 13). Within 4 years of leaving high school, students at vocational, business, or technical schools were more than three times as likely to have completed their programs as were those at 2-year or community colleges (59 percent vs. 18 percent, $p < .01$) and were 10 times as likely to finish as were those who had left 4-year universities (6 percent, $p < .001$). With sample students having been out of

²⁵ Respondents were asked, "Are you working toward a diploma, certificate, or license from this work?"

high school for less than four years (and many out for less than two), when comparing graduation rates across postsecondary schools it is important to be aware that the time needed to complete vocational programs is shorter than the 2 years or 4 years usually required to complete other programs. On average, students at vocational, business, or technical schools took slightly more than 1 year (13 months) to complete their postsecondary programs.

Figure 13. Postsecondary school completion within 4 years of leaving high school by youth with disabilities who had ever enrolled in a postsecondary school



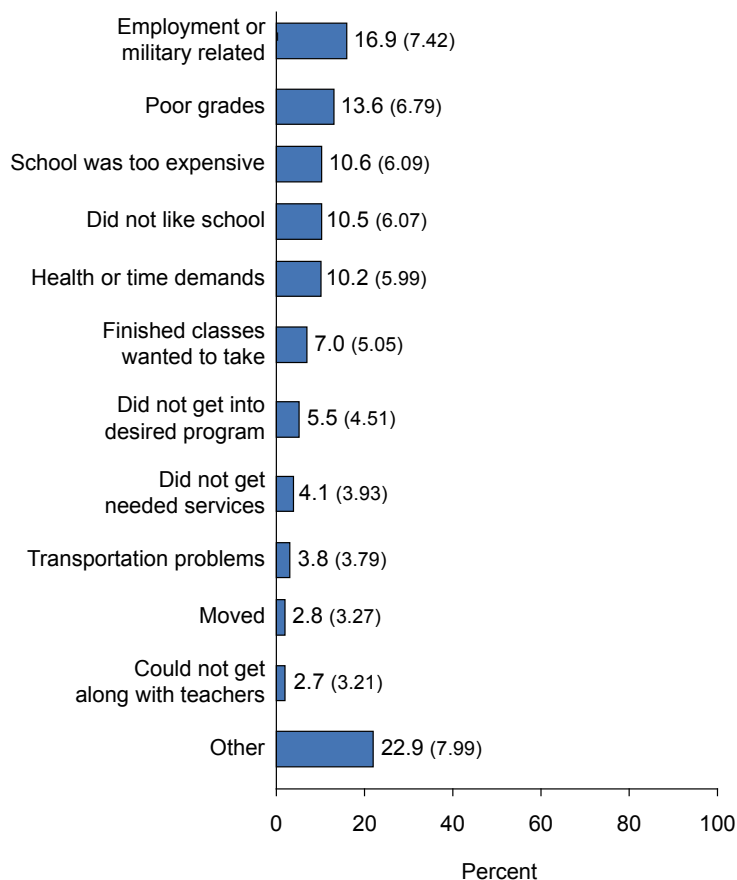
NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 70 to 440 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Reasons for leaving postsecondary school varied for the 71 percent of postsecondary school leavers who did not graduate or complete their programs (figure 14).²⁶ For example, 17 percent reportedly left for job or military reasons, including being offered a job, choosing to work, needing to find a job, or wanting to enter the military. Approximately 14 percent asserted that they left because of poor grades, 11 percent cited school as being too expensive or not liking school. Health or time demands were cited by 10 percent of leavers. Seven percent reported leaving because they had finished the classes they wanted to take, even though these classes did not result in a diploma or certificate. Approximately 5 percent or fewer reported leaving postsecondary school because the necessary services or programs were not available, and less than 5 percent reported leaving because of transportation problems, having to move, or not getting along with teachers. One in five (23 percent) described leaving for other reasons, including getting married and wanting to travel.

²⁶ Respondents who had been in a postsecondary program earlier but were not currently enrolled and had not graduated were asked, “Why did you stop going to college?”

Figure 14. Reasons why youth who had not graduated from or completed postsecondary school and no longer were enrolled, had left postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 290 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Disability Differences in Postsecondary School Completion

The majority of students in all disability categories who were enrolled in postsecondary school at the time of the interview reported that they were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license, with rates ranging from 84 percent of those with emotional disturbances to 99 percent of students with speech/language impairments (no significant differences; table 13).

Within 4 years of leaving high school, postsecondary school graduation rates ranged from 12 percent for youth with visual impairments to 45 percent of those with emotional disturbances (no significant differences).

Table 13. Postsecondary school completion within 4 years of leaving high school, by disability category

	Learning disability	Speech/language impairment	Mental retardation	Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment	Autism	Traumatic brain injury	Multiple disabilities	Deaf-blindness
	Percent											
Students enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	87.7 (6.10)	98.7 (2.15)	‡	83.8 (9.25)	95.0 (4.52)	96.9 (4.13)	88.3 (5.75)	90.4 (5.28)	90.1 (8.06)	88.3 (12.84)	72.6 (16.77)	‡
Graduation or completion rate of students who had been enrolled in postsecondary school but were not enrolled at the time of the interview	25.2 (9.55)	40.8 (12.95)	‡	44.8 (11.90)	15.4 (9.85)	12.2 (9.98)	27.3 (10.46)	29.4 (10.38)	‡	‡	‡	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 460 youth for graduation rate to 850 youth for working toward a diploma.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2 and 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003 and 2005.

Differences in Postsecondary School Completion by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Postsecondary school completion expectations and rates of completion did not differ significantly by secondary-school leaving characteristics (table 14). Postsecondary completion ranged from 19 percent of those who had left high school less than 1 year earlier to 41 percent for those who had been out of high school from 2 to 4 years (no significant differences).

Table 14. Postsecondary school completion within 4 years of leaving high school, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 1 year	1 up to 2 years	2 up to 4 years
	Percent				
Students enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	88.2 (4.37)	85.4 (21.42)	96.4 (3.87)	78.7 (8.73)	88.8 (7.22)
Graduation or completion rate of students who had been enrolled in postsecondary school but were not enrolled at the time of the interview	29.3 (7.64)	‡	19.0 (10.41)	14.5 (11.05)	40.7 (11.71)

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Demographic Differences in Postsecondary School Completion

Postsecondary school completion expectations and rates of completion also did not differ significantly by demographic characteristics (table 15).

Table 15. Postsecondary school completion within 4 years of leaving high school, by household income, race/ethnicity, and gender

	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	Race/Ethnicity			Male	Female
				White	African American	Hispanic		
Percent								
Students enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	87.1 (10.29)	88.2 (8.37)	95.5 (3.37)	87.5 (5.22)	88.9 (9.42)	93.4 (8.44)	88.5 (5.39)	88.5 (6.39)
Graduation or completion rate of students who had been enrolled in postsecondary school but were not enrolled at the time of the interview	31.0 (13.64)	28.6 (14.42)	25.1 (10.49)	23.7 (8.22)	33.7 (15.37)	55.9 (29.86)	32.7 (9.55)	22.5 (10.92)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for youth out of high school up to 4 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,880 to 2,930 youth.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005.

Summary

This chapter describes the postsecondary enrollment and experiences of youth with disabilities who had been out of secondary school up to 4 years. It focuses on participation in three types of postsecondary institutions—2-year or community colleges; postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools; and 4-year colleges.

Forty-five percent of youth with disabilities were reported to have continued on to postsecondary education within 4 years of leaving high school. They were less likely to enroll in postsecondary programs than were their peers in the general population, of whom more than half ever had attended postsecondary school. Youth with disabilities were reported to be more likely to have enrolled in 2-year or community colleges than in vocational, business, or technical schools or 4-year colleges or universities, and were least likely to have enrolled in 4-year colleges. With similar rates of attendance at 2-year colleges, the gap in postsecondary enrollment between youth with disabilities and those in the general population was most apparent for enrollment in 4-year universities.

Postsecondary enrollment varied widely by disability category, with attendance since high school ranging from 27 percent to 78 percent. With enrollment rates of 70 percent and higher, youth with visual or hearing impairments were more likely to attend postsecondary school than were those in several other disability categories. For example, youth with visual or hearing impairments were more likely to attend postsecondary school (78 percent and 72 percent, respectively) than were those with speech/language or other health impairments (55 percent), orthopedic impairments (54 percent), learning disabilities (47 percent), multiple disabilities (35 percent), emotional disturbances (34 percent), or mental retardation (27 percent).

Youth in several disability categories were more likely to have ever enrolled in a postsecondary program than were those with emotional disturbances (34 percent), specifically, youth with speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments (ranging from 55 percent to 77 percent). Similarly, postsecondary enrollment was higher for youth in several categories than for those with mental retardation, including learning disabilities ; speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments; or autism (ranging from 54 percent to 77 percent).

High school graduates were reported to be more likely to have enrolled in postsecondary school than were those who left high school by dropping out (51 percent vs. 17 percent). The likelihood of ever having been enrolled in postsecondary education increased as youth were out of high school longer, with those out of high school more than 1 year more likely to have been enrolled than those out up to 1 year (65 percent vs. 31 percent). Household income also was related to the likelihood of postsecondary enrollment, with youth from wealthier households being almost twice as likely ever to have enrolled (57 percent vs. 30 percent). Rates of enrollment in postsecondary schools did not differ significantly by race or ethnicity for youth with disabilities.

On average, students with disabilities who continued on to postsecondary school did so within 5 months of leaving high school. Students enrolled in 4-year colleges sooner after high school than they did in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools (3 months vs. 7 months). Most students with disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education programs on a consistent (86 percent), full-time (71 percent) basis.

Postsecondary students who attended 2-year colleges were reported to be more likely to have been enrolled in an academic than vocational course of study (57 percent vs. 29 percent). Students who had primarily a vocational focus at 2-year colleges and those who attended vocational, business, or technical schools were enrolled in a range of vocational majors. Similarly, students with disabilities at 4-year colleges also focused on a broad range of majors.

When students with disabilities leave high school and enter postsecondary institutions, the responsibility for arranging for accommodations and supports shifts from the school to the student. To receive accommodations or supports from a postsecondary school because of a disability, students first must disclose a disability to their school. However, disclosure of a disability is voluntary. More than half (55 percent) of postsecondary students who were identified by their secondary schools as having a disability did not report considering themselves to have a disability by the time they transitioned to postsecondary school. An additional 8 percent considered themselves to have a disability but chose not to disclose it to their postsecondary schools. Slightly more than one-third of postsecondary students with disabilities (37 percent) identified themselves as having a disability and informed their postsecondary schools of their disability.

Twenty-four percent of postsecondary students who were identified as having a disability by their secondary schools were reported to have received accommodations or supports from their postsecondary schools because of their disability. In contrast, when these postsecondary students were in high school, more than three times as many (84 percent) received some type of accommodation or support because of a disability. Postsecondary students who were given assistance because of their disability received a range of accommodations and supports from their schools. Additional time to complete tests was a frequent type of assistance—received by 68 percent of those who were reported to get accommodations and supports.

Postsecondary students were reported to receive help with their schoolwork beyond the support because of their disability provided by schools. Forty-five percent received some type of help, including tutoring and study center assistance—whether or not the assistance was related to their disability. Forty-four percent of students also sought help on their own outside of what their postsecondary schools provided.

Most students who received any type of help with their schoolwork—from the school independent of or because of a disability, or help outside of what the school provided—reported that these supports were “very” or “somewhat” useful (90 percent) and that they “probably” or “definitely” (86 percent) were getting enough assistance.

Students varied widely by disability category in the extent to which they identified themselves as individuals with a disability and had informed their postsecondary schools of the disability. For example, students with visual impairments (79 percent), multiple disabilities (79 percent), or orthopedic impairments (63 percent) were more likely to report considering themselves as having a disability and to have disclosed that disability to their postsecondary schools than were those with speech/language impairments (18 percent), emotional disabilities (21 percent), or learning disabilities (36 percent). Students in disability categories that were more likely to disclose a disability to their postsecondary schools also were more likely to receive accommodations and supports from their schools because of a disability. The rate of receiving help with schoolwork overall—whether or not specifically because of a disability—did not differ across most disability categories.

Most students with disabilities who were currently enrolled in postsecondary school reported that they were working toward a diploma or certificate. Despite the 89 percent of students who reported intending to finish their programs, when students left their postsecondary schools fewer than 3 in 10 (29 percent) were reported to have graduated or completed their programs. Reasons for leaving postsecondary school varied for the 71 percent of postsecondary school leavers who did not graduate or complete their programs.

This chapter has presented a national picture of the postsecondary experiences of youth with disabilities. Chapter 3 will examine employment experiences, and chapter 4 will focus on the overlap between these two outcomes, describing engagement in school, work, or preparation for work.