

### 3. Employment Key Findings

Employment during the years identified as *emerging adulthood* is associated with differences in psychological well-being (Galambos, Barker, and Krahn 2006) and improved chances for a higher quality of life (Stodden and Mruzek 2010). Full-time employment leads to financial independence and is an important first step on the path to adulthood (Janus 2009). Unemployment not only results in lost wages, but also a reduced quality of life for the individual and diminished growth capacity for society as a whole (Wisman 2010). People with disabilities have a much higher unemployment rate than the overall population (The National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth and Workforce Strategy Center 2009); and low adult employment is associated with poor quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families (O’Day and Stapleton 2009).

As young adults with disabilities continue on their path through emerging adulthood, opportunities for employment increase. For those already employed, the opportunity for higher wages increases, as well. This chapter describes the employment of young adults with disabilities who had been out of high school up to 6 years. It focuses on the employment status and wages of post high school young adults and addresses the following questions:

- To what extent do young adults with disabilities have a paid job other than work around the house?
- How does their employment status compare with that of their peers in the general population?
- What is the hourly wage for young adults with disabilities who are currently or who have recently been employed?
- How do the hourly wages of young adults with disabilities compare with those of their peers in the general population?
- How do employment and hourly wage rates differ for young adults in different disability categories and for those with different demographic characteristics?

This chapter presents findings related to employment and hourly wages for young adults with disabilities as a group as well as differences between young adults who differ in their disability category and demographic characteristics. Only differences that are significant at least at the  $p < .01$  level are reported.

#### Employment Status at Time of Interview

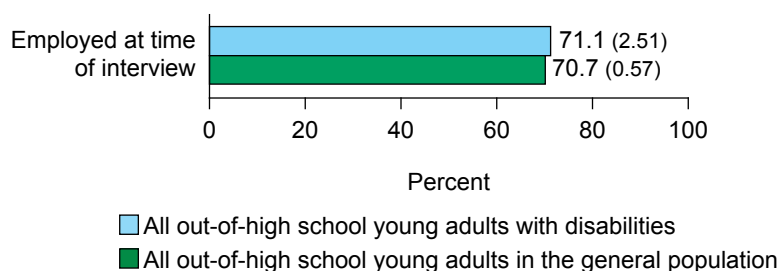
Regarding the employment status of young adults with disabilities who were out of secondary school at the time of the interview:

- Seventy-one percent were reported to have a paid job at the time of the interview other than work around the house (figure 4).<sup>22</sup>
- They were as likely to have a paid job at the time of the interview as were their same-age peers in the general population, of whom 71 percent reported currently having a paid job.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Respondents were asked, “Do you [YOUTH] have a paid job now, other than work around the house?”

Figure 4. Employment status of young adults with disabilities and young adults in the general population



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 4,140 young adults with disabilities. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2001 youth survey, responses for 19- to 23-year-olds.

### **Disability Differences in Employment Status**

- The employment status of young adults with disabilities at the time of the interview varied widely by disability category with employment at the time of the interview ranging from 30 percent to 79 percent (table 8).
- Young adults with learning disabilities (79 percent) were more likely to have a paid job than were those with deaf-blindness (30 percent), orthopedic impairments (38 percent), visual impairments (40 percent), traumatic brain injuries (44 percent), autism (45 percent), mental retardation (46 percent), or multiple disabilities (46 percent,  $p < .001$  for all comparisons).
- Similarly, young adults with other health impairments or speech/language impairments were more likely to have a paid job (68 percent, each) than were those with deaf-blindness (30 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), orthopedic impairments (38 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), visual impairments (40 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), traumatic brain injuries (44 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons), autism (45 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons), mental retardation (46 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), or multiple disabilities (46 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons).
- Young adults with emotional disturbances were more likely to have a paid job (65 percent) than were those with deaf-blindness (30 percent,  $p < .001$ ), orthopedic impairments (38 percent,  $p < .001$ ), visual impairments (40 percent,  $p < .01$ ), autism (45 percent,  $p < .01$ ), or mental retardation (46 percent,  $p < .01$ ).
- Young adults with hearing impairments were more likely to have a paid job (64 percent) than were those with deaf-blindness (30 percent,  $p < .001$ ), orthopedic impairments (38 percent,  $p < .001$ ), visual impairments (40 percent,  $p < .01$ ), or mental retardation (46 percent,  $p < .01$ ).

<sup>23</sup> Respondents to the general population NLSY97 2001 survey were asked, “Are you currently working for an employer?”

Table 8. Paid employment outside the home of young adults, by disability category

Employment status	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											
Percentage reported to have been:												
Employed at time of interview	78.6 (3.39)	67.8 (3.81)	46.0 (4.42)	64.5 (4.41)	63.9 (5.24)	40.3 (6.08)	37.7 (4.71)	68.2 (4.06)	45.2 (5.82)	44.1 (7.79)	46.1 (6.24)	29.8 (6.75)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 4,150 young adults with disabilities. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

### ***Differences in Employment Status by High School-Leaving Characteristics***

- High school completers were more likely to have been reported to be employed at the time of the interview than were their peers who did not complete high school (73 percent vs. 52 percent,  $p < .01$ ; table 9).
- Employment status at the time of the interview did not differ by the number of years since leaving high school.

Table 9. Paid employment outside the home of young adults with disabilities, by high school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

Employment status	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 2 years	2 up to 4 years	4 up to 6 years
	Percent				
Percentage reported to have been:					
Employed at time of interview	73.2 (2.62)	52.3 (7.61)	60.4 (5.30)	72.9 (3.67)	74.4 (4.31)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples ranging from approximately 3,690 to 4,150 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

### Demographic Differences in Employment Status

- Post-high school employment differences were apparent for families with varying income levels. Young adults from households with parent incomes of more than \$50,000 were more likely to have a paid job at the time of the interview (79 , table 10) than were those from households with parent incomes of \$25,000 or less (58 percent,  $p < .001$ ).
- Employment status did not differ significantly by race or ethnicity or gender.

Table 10. Paid employment outside the home of young adults with disabilities, by parents' household income and young adults' race/ethnicity and gender

Employment status	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	Race/Ethnicity			Male	Female
				White	African American	Hispanic		
Percentage reported to have been:				Percent				
Employed at time of interview	58.3 (5.08)	74.7 (4.74)	78.9 (3.35)	75.8 (2.82)	59.5 (6.44)	63.6 (8.07)	75.2 (2.96)	63.7 (4.53)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples ranging from approximately 3,690 to 4,150 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

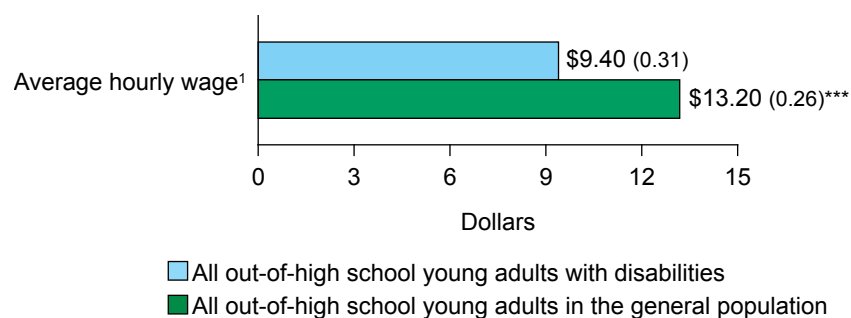
### Hourly Wages at Time of Interview

Earning a livable wage is integral to an acceptable quality of life. As set by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the federal minimum wage in 2007 started at \$5.15 per hour before being increased to \$5.85 per hour effective July 24, 2007 (see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/coverage.htm>). Although there is some variability in the minimum wages by state, federal minimum wage law supersedes state minimum wage laws where the federal minimum wage is greater than the state minimum wage (see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/america.html>). In those states where the state minimum wage is greater than the federal minimum wage, the state minimum wage prevails. As a result, the minimum wages across the states in 2007 ranged from \$5.15 to \$7.93 per hour. Young adults with disabilities were asked to report the hourly wage received at their current or most recent job. The average hourly wage is reported here.

Regarding the hourly wages of young adults with disabilities who were out of secondary school at the time of the interview:

- The mean hourly wage was reported to be \$9.40 (figure 5).<sup>24</sup>
- They earned less than their same-age peers in the general population, who earned a mean hourly wage of \$13.20 ( $p < .001$ ).

Figure 5. Average hourly wage of young adults with disabilities and young adults in the general population



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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 2,110 young adults with disabilities.

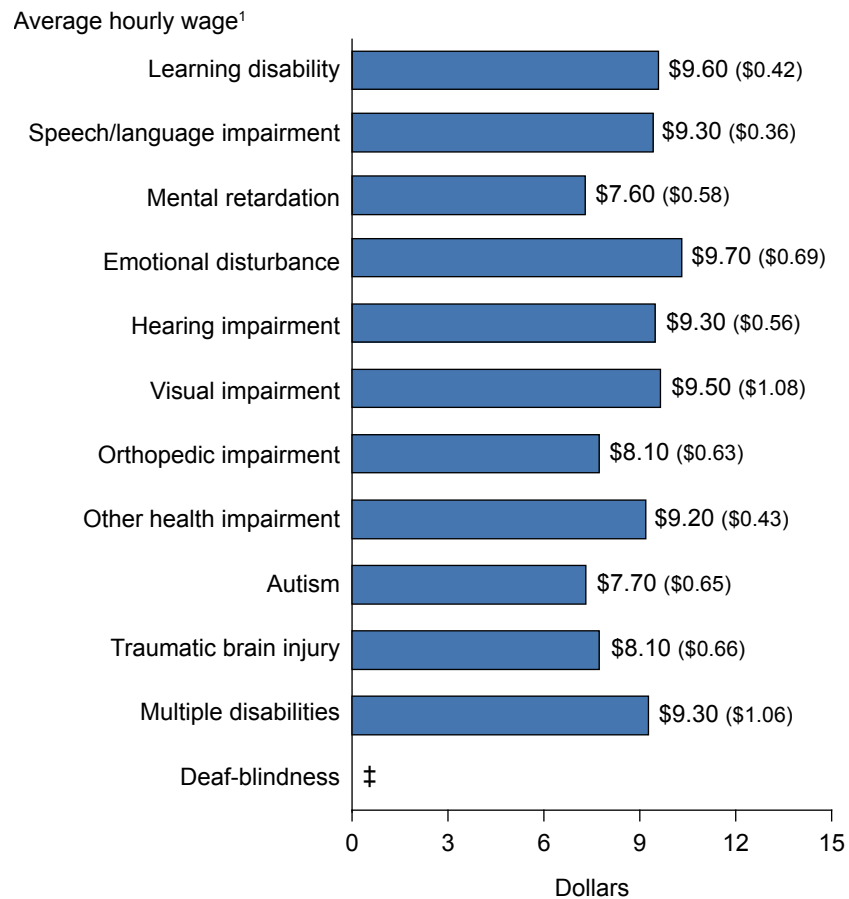
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2001 youth survey, responses for 19- to 23-year-olds.

<sup>24</sup> Respondents were asked, “About how much are you [YOUTH] paid at this job?” Weekly, yearly, and monthly wages were converted to hourly wages by dividing the wage by the number of hours worked per week, and then multiplying by 4.3 for monthly-reported wages or by 52 for yearly-reported wages.

### Disability Differences in Hourly Wages

- The average hourly wage did not differ significantly by disability category, with one exception (figure 6). Young adults with learning disabilities were reported to earn a higher average hourly wage (\$9.60) than those with mental retardation (\$7.60,  $p < .01$ ).

Figure 6. Average hourly wage of young adults, by disability category



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

<sup>1</sup> Rounded to nearest \$0.10.

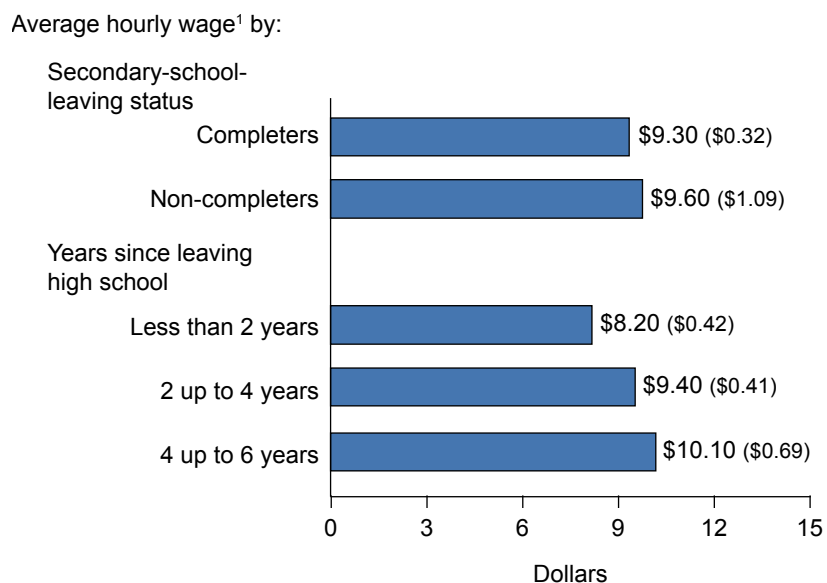
NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples ranging from approximately 3,690 to 4,150 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

### **Differences in Hourly Wages by High School-Leaving Characteristics**

- Average hourly wages did not differ significantly by secondary school-leaving status or the number of years since leaving high school (figure 7).

Figure 7. Average wage of young adults with disabilities, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school



<sup>1</sup> Rounded to nearest \$0.10.

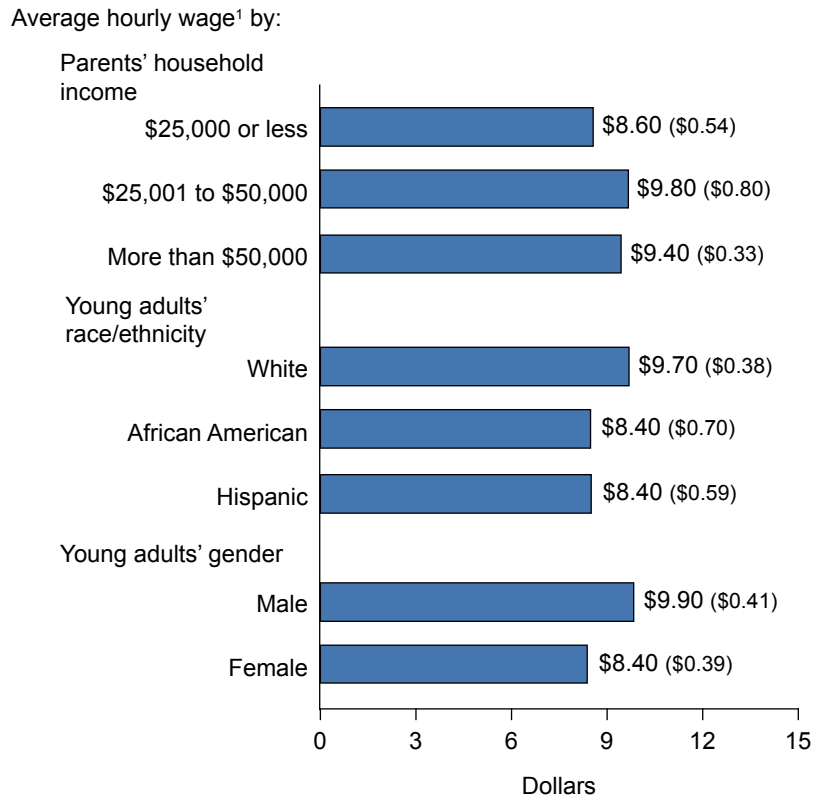
NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples ranging from approximately 3,690 to 4,150 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

**Differences in Hourly Wages by Demographic Characteristics**

- Males earned a higher mean hourly wage at their current or most recent job than females (\$9.90 vs. \$8.40,  $p < .01$ ; figure 8).
- Average hourly wages did not differ significantly by parents’ household income or young adults’ race/ethnicity.

Figure 8. Average hourly wage of young adults with disabilities, by parents’ household income and young adults’ race/ethnicity and gender



<sup>1</sup> Rounded to nearest \$0.10.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples ranging from approximately 3,690 to 4,150 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.