

## 4. Engagement Key Findings

NLTS2 considered young adults with disabilities as being productively engaged in the community when they had participated in employment, education, and/or job training activities since leaving secondary school. Addressing this broader concept of engagement, rather than considering individual outcomes (employment or postsecondary education) separately, was encouraged by the advisory panel during the design of the initial NLTS; as a result, NLTS was one of the first studies to present a broader perspective on how young adults and young adults with disabilities could be productively engaged in their communities. The advisory panel for the current study continued to endorse that view of engagement. The importance of this broader view of what constitutes a successful transition is now incorporated in the current federal policy that requires states to collect data on “Indicator 14”—that is, “the percent of young adults who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school” (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B)). The NLTS2 operationalization of this concept, as endorsed by the NLTS2 design advisory panel, is somewhat broader than Indicator 14, in that NLTS2 includes all forms of employment, not just competitive employment, and includes job training as a productive form of preparation for work, in addition to enrollment in postsecondary education.

In this chapter, young adults with disabilities are considered productively engaged in the community when they had participated in one or more of the following activities since leaving secondary school:

- Employment—worked for pay, other than work around the house,<sup>25</sup> including supported or sheltered<sup>26</sup> employment.
- Education—attended a vocational, business, or technical school; a 2-year, junior, or community college; or a 4-year college or university.
- Job training—received training in specific job skills (e.g., car repair, web page design, food service) from someone other than an employer or a family member, such as an agency or a government training program.

This chapter describes the productive engagement in the community of young adults with disabilities who had been out of high school up to 6 years. It focuses on the education, employment, and/or job training of young adults with disabilities since leaving secondary school and addresses the following questions:

- To what extent do young adults with disabilities productively engage in the community?
- How does their engagement in the community compare with that of their peers in the general population?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This chapter focuses on involvement in any type of paid employment (other than work around the house), mirroring much of what is presented in this report’s employment chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Sheltered employment is employment provided for individuals with disabilities in a protected environment under an institutional program.

<sup>27</sup> Young adults in the general population were considered to have been positively engaged if they were employed or had a job since turning 18; or had ever attended a postsecondary school.

- How does engagement differ for young adults in different disability categories and for those with different demographic characteristics?

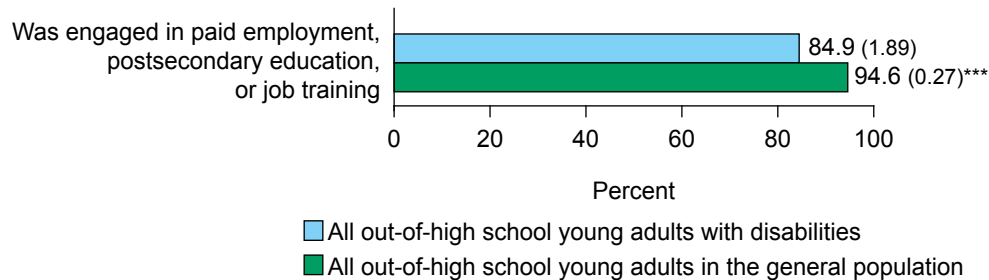
This chapter presents findings related to productive engagement in the community of young adults with disabilities as a group as well as differences between young adults who differ in their disability category and demographic characteristics that are significantly different at the  $p < .01$  or  $p < .001$  level.

### Engagement in Education, Employment, or Training for Employment

Regarding the productive engagement in the community of young adults with disabilities who were out-of-secondary school at the time of the interview:

- Eighty-five percent were reported to have engaged in employment, postsecondary education, or job training since leaving high school (figure 9).

Figure 9. Productive engagement of young adults with disabilities and those in the general population



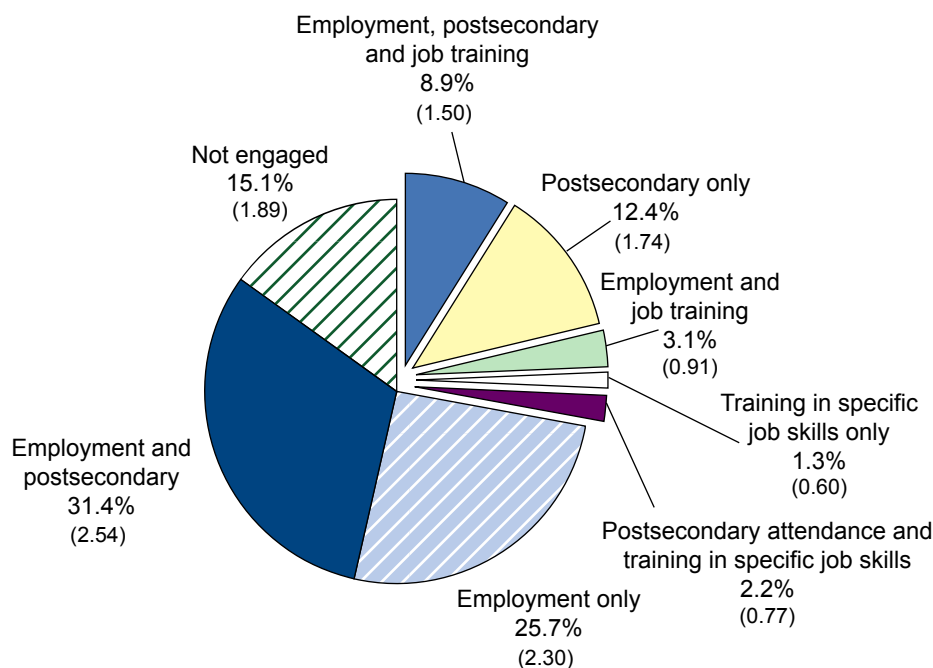
\*\*\* $p < .001$  for difference between young adults with disabilities and young adults in the general population.

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 4,650 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.

- They were less likely to engage in these activities than were their same-age peers in the general population, of whom 95 percent reported to have been engaged in employment, postsecondary education, or job training since leaving high school ( $p < .001$ ).
- The productive engagement of young adults with disabilities ranged from training in specific job skills (1 percent) to a combination of paid employment and postsecondary education (31 percent, figure 10). Except for “paid employment only,” young adults with disabilities were more likely to engage in a combination of paid employment and postsecondary education than in other modes of engagement ( $p < .001$  for all comparisons).

Figure 10. Modes of engagement of young adults with disabilities

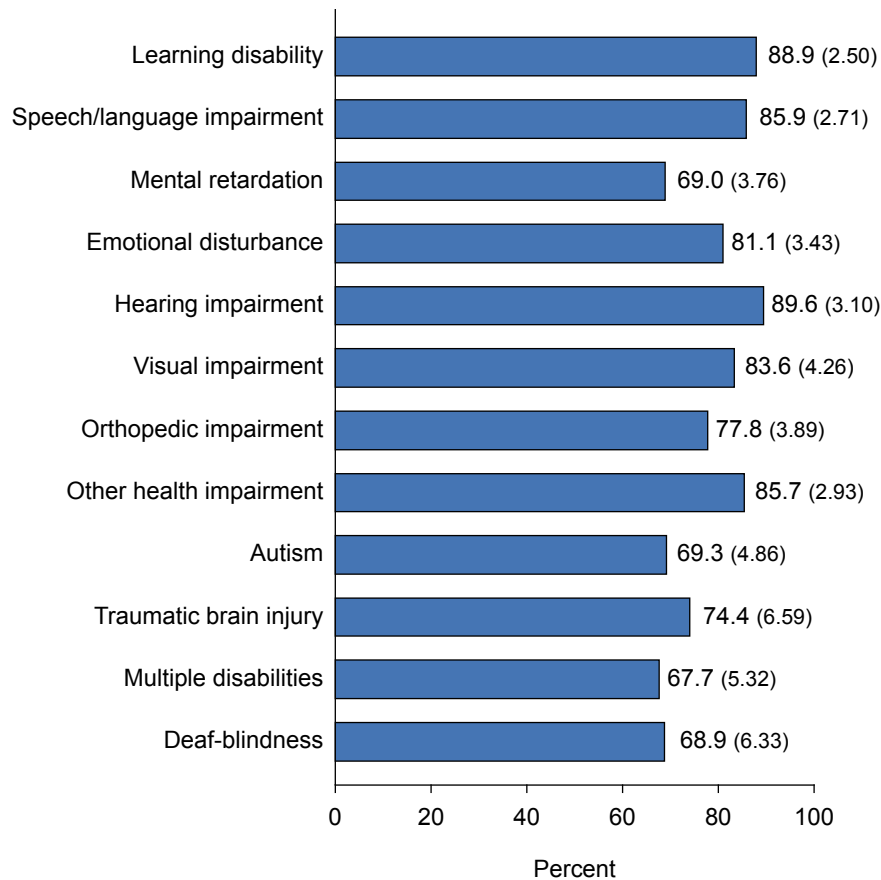


NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 4,650 young adults with disabilities. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.

### ***Disability Differences in Engagement in Education, Employment, or Training for Employment***

- Young adults with hearing impairments (90 percent, figure 11), learning disabilities (89 percent), speech/language impairments (86 percent), or other health impairments (86 percent) were more likely to have been productively engaged since high school than were those with mental retardation (69 percent,  $p < .001$  for all comparisons) or autism (69 percent,  $p < .001$  for comparison with hearing impairments and learning disabilities; and  $p < .01$  for comparison with speech/language impairments and other health impairments).
- Similarly, young adults with hearing impairments (90 percent), learning disabilities (89 percent), speech/language impairments (86 percent), or other health impairments (86 percent) were more likely to have been productively engaged than were those with multiple disabilities (68 percent,  $p < .001$  for comparison with hearing impairments and learning disabilities; and  $p < .01$  for comparison with speech/language impairments and other health impairments) or deaf-blindness (69 percent,  $p < .01$  for comparison with hearing impairments and learning disabilities).

Figure 11. Productive engagement of young adults with disabilities, by disability category



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 a sample of approximately 4,650 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.

- Young adults with speech/language impairments were more likely to have been engaged in a combination of paid employment and postsecondary education since high school (42 percent, table 11) than were those with mental retardation (11 percent,  $p < .001$ ), multiple disabilities (11 percent,  $p < .001$ ), deaf-blindness (19 percent,  $p < .001$ ), autism (23 percent,  $p < .01$ ), orthopedic impairments (25 percent,  $p < .01$ ), or emotional disturbances (26 percent,  $p < .01$ ).
- Young adults with other health impairments (39 percent), visual impairments (35 percent), learning disabilities (36 percent), hearing impairments (34 percent), emotional disturbances (26 percent), or orthopedic impairments (25 percent) were more likely to have been engaged in a combination of paid employment and postsecondary education since high school than were those with mental retardation or multiple disabilities (11 percent, each;  $p < .001$  for all comparisons except for emotional disturbances and orthopedic impairments).

Table 11. Modes of engagement of young adults, 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											
Employment only	24.2 (3.41)	18.8 (3.05)	33.4 (3.83)	33.4 (4.14)	15.9 (3.71)	10.0 (3.45)	10.8 (2.91)	24.9 (3.62)	15.3 (3.79)	12.5 (4.99)	24.2 (4.87)	14.5 (4.81)
Postsecondary education only	14.0 (2.76)	14.9 (2.78)	7.2 (2.10)	8.4 (2.43)	15.3 (3.66)	14.8 (4.09)	19.5 (3.71)	8.4 (2.32)	9.3 (3.06)	15.3 (5.43)	10.5 (3.49)	16.2 (5.04)
Employment and postsecondary education	35.5 (3.81)	41.2 (3.84)	10.8 (2.52)	25.8 (3.84)	34.3 (4.82)	34.8 (5.48)	24.9 (4.05)	38.6 (4.07)	23.2 (4.44)	28.6 (6.82)	10.8 (3.53)	18.9 (5.35)
Employment, postsecondary education, and job training	9.0 (2.28)	6.3 (1.90)	9.0 (2.32)	8.3 (2.42)	18.7 (3.96)	14.8 (4.09)	10.8 (2.91)	8.7 (2.36)	10.4 (3.21)	12.2 (4.94)	5.0 (2.48)	8.7 (3.85)
Employment and job training	2.5 (1.24)	3.0 (1.33)	5.2 (1.80)	2.6 (1.40)	2.3 (1.52)	1.9 (1.57)	6.4 (2.29)	3.7 (1.58)	6.0 (2.50)	5.5 (3.44)	9.8 (3.38)	4.6 (2.86)
Job training only	1.3 (0.90)	1.1 (0.81)	2.3 (1.22)	0.5 (0.62)	0.4 (0.64)	0.9 (1.09)	0.7 (0.78)	0.2 (0.37)	1.5 (1.28)	0.1 (0.48)	2.4 (1.74)	1.1 (1.43)
Postsecondary and job training	2.5 (1.24)	0.7 (0.65)	1.1 (0.85)	2.0 (1.23)	2.6 (1.62)	6.5 (2.84)	4.5 (1.94)	1.3 (0.95)	3.6 (1.96)	0.1 (0.48)	4.9 (2.46)	4.9 (2.95)
No engagement	11.1 (2.50)	14.1 (2.71)	31.0 (3.76)	18.9 (3.43)	10.4 (3.10)	16.4 (4.26)	22.2 (3.89)	14.3 (2.93)	30.7 (4.86)	25.6 (6.59)	32.3 (5.32)	31.1 (6.33)

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 a sample of approximately 4,650 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.

- The percentage of young adults with disabilities reported to have been engaged only in paid employment since leaving high school ranged from 10 percent of young adults with visual impairments to 33 percent of those with emotional disturbance or mental retardation. Young adults with mental retardation or emotional disturbances were more likely to have been engaged only in paid employment (33 percent, each) than were those with visual impairments (10 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), orthopedic impairments (11 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), traumatic brain injuries (13 percent,  $p < .001$  for comparison with mental retardation and  $p < .01$  for comparison with emotional disturbance), deaf-blindness (15 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons), autism (15 percent,  $p < .01$  for comparison with mental retardation and  $p < .01$  for comparison with emotional disturbance), hearing impairments (16 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons), or speech/language impairments (19 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons).
- The percentage of young adults with disabilities reported to have been engaged only in postsecondary education ranged from 7 percent of young adults with mental retardation to 20 percent of those with orthopedic impairments. Young adults with orthopedic impairments were more likely to have been engaged in postsecondary attendance only than were those with mental retardation (20 percent vs. 7 percent,  $p < .01$ ).
- The percentage of young adults with disabilities reported to have been engaged in a combination of paid employment, postsecondary education, and job training since

leaving high school ranged from 5 percent of young adults with multiple disabilities to 19 percent of those with hearing impairments. Young adults with hearing impairments were more likely to be engaged in the combination of these activities (19 percent) than were those with multiple disabilities (5 percent,  $p < .01$ ) or speech/language impairments (6 percent,  $p < .01$ ).

- Engagement in a combination of paid employment and job training ranged from 2 percent of young adults with visual impairments to 10 percent of those with multiple disabilities. Engagement in the combination of these activities did not differ significantly by disability category.
- The percentage of young adults with disabilities reported to have been engaged in a combination of postsecondary education and job training since leaving high school ranged from less than 1 percent of young adults with traumatic brain injuries to 7 percent of those with visual impairments. Engagement in the combination of these activities did not differ significantly by disability category.
- Two percent or fewer of young adults with disabilities in each disability category were reported to have been engaged only in job training since leaving high school. Engagement in the combination of these activities did not differ significantly by disability category.
- The percentage of young adults with disabilities reported to have not been engaged in paid employment, postsecondary education, or job training since leaving high school ranged from 10 percent of young adults with hearing impairments to 32 percent of those with multiple disabilities. Young adults with mental retardation were more likely to not be engaged in any of these activities than were those in several other disability categories (31 percent), including young adults with hearing impairments (10 percent,  $p < .001$ ), learning disabilities (11 percent,  $p < .001$ ), speech/language impairments (14 percent,  $p < .001$ ), or other health impairments (14 percent,  $p < .001$ ).
- Similarly, young adults with multiple disabilities (32 percent) or autism (31 percent) were more likely to not be engaged than were those in several other disability categories, including young adults with hearing impairments (10 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), learning disabilities (11 percent,  $p < .001$  for both comparisons), or other health impairments (14 percent,  $p < .01$  for both comparisons).

### ***Differences in Engagement in Education, Employment, or Training for Employment by High School-Leaving Characteristics***

- Young adults with disabilities who completed high school were more likely than those who did not complete high school to have been engaged in a combination of paid employment and postsecondary education (34 percent vs. 12 percent,  $p < .001$ ; table 12); in postsecondary education only (13 percent vs. 4 percent,  $p < .01$ ); or in a combination of paid employment, postsecondary education, and job training (10 percent vs. 1 percent,  $p < .001$ ).
- Young adults with disabilities who did not complete high school were more likely than those who did complete high school to have been engaged be in paid employment only (44 percent vs. 24 percent,  $p < .01$ ) or to not be engaged at all (36 percent vs. 13 percent,  $p < .001$ ).
- Engagement did not vary significantly by the number of years since leaving high school.

Table 12. Modes of engagement of young adults with disabilities, by secondary-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 2 years	2 up to 4 years	4 up to 6 years
	Percent				
Employment only	23.5 (2.40)	43.8 (6.76)	23.6 (4.29)	28.0 (3.54)	23.7 (4.01)
Postsecondary education only	13.4 (1.93)	4.2 (2.73)	14.4 (3.55)	11.6 (2.52)	12.5 (3.12)
Employment and postsecondary education	33.8 (2.68)	11.5 (4.35)	26.2 (4.44)	32.8 (3.70)	32.4 (4.42)
Employment, postsecondary education, and job training	9.8 (1.69)	1.2 (1.48)	9.0 (2.89)	5.4 (1.78)	13.4 (3.21)
Employment and job training	3.2 (1.00)	2.1 (1.95)	1.9 (1.38)	3.5 (1.45)	3.1 (1.64)
Job training only	1.3 (0.64)	0.6 (1.05)	0.6 (0.78)	0.3 (0.43)	2.9 (1.58)
Postsecondary and job training	2.4 (0.87)	1.0 (1.36)	1.8 (1.34)	2.3 (1.18)	2.4 (1.44)
No engagement	12.6 (1.88)	35.5 (6.52)	22.6 (4.23)	16.1 (2.90)	9.7 (2.79)

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 a sample of approximately 4,650 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 Engagement in Education, Employment, or Training for Employment***

- Family income differences were apparent in the rate of engagement in paid employment and postsecondary education. Young adults with disabilities from households with incomes of more than \$50,000 were more likely to have been engaged in the combination of these activities (40 percent) than were those from households with incomes of \$25,000 or less (24 percent,  $p < .01$ ; table 13).
- Engagement did not vary significantly by race or ethnicity or gender.

Table 13. Modes of engagement of young adults with disabilities, by parents' household income and young adults' race/ethnicity and gender

	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African American	Hispanic	Male	Female
				Percent				
Employment only	29.4 (4.35)	32.0 (4.87)	18.2 (3.06)	27.1 (2.82)	20.9 (4.91)	19.9 (6.35)	25.6 (2.86)	25.8 (3.87)
Postsecondary education only	8.6 (2.68)	14.7 (3.70)	13.4 (2.71)	11.6 (2.03)	8.7 (3.40)	24.2 (6.81)	11.1 (2.06)	14.7 (3.13)
Employment and postsecondary education	24.4 (4.10)	28.0 (4.69)	40.0 (3.89)	35.6 (3.03)	27.0 (5.36)	23.6 (6.76)	31.1 (3.03)	32.0 (4.13)
Employment, postsecondary education, and job training	7.8 (2.56)	5.4 (2.36)	12.6 (2.64)	7.9 (1.71)	11.3 (3.82)	12.2 (5.21)	9.3 (1.90)	8.1 (2.41)
Employment and job training	2.6 (1.52)	3.8 (2.00)	3.2 (1.40)	3.8 (1.21)	1.7 (1.56)	1.6 (2.00)	3.1 (1.14)	3.0 (1.51)
Job training only	3.4 (1.73)	0.1 (0.33)	0.3 (0.43)	0.3 (0.35)	4.9 (2.61)	0.6 (1.23)	1.6 (0.82)	0.7 (0.74)
Postsecondary and job training	2.0 (1.34)	2.9 (1.75)	1.9 (1.08)	1.5 (0.77)	3.2 (2.13)	2.5 (2.48)	2.3 (0.98)	2.2 (1.30)
No engagement	21.8 (3.94)	13.2 (3.54)	10.4 (2.42)	12.2 (2.07)	22.2 (5.02)	15.4 (5.74)	16.0 (2.40)	13.4 (3.01)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 6 years. NLT2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 4,650 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 (NLT2), Wave 4 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007.