

2. Postsecondary Education

Over the course of a lifetime, an individual with a college degree will earn \$1 million more on average than a worker with only a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Commerce 2002). As the U.S. 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, young adults 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). Unlike high school, there is not a mandatory Individualized Education Program (IEP) process to identify and provide the supports students may need to succeed in the postsecondary 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 young adults with disabilities raises the following questions:

- To what extent do young adults 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 young adults with disabilities who have been out of secondary school for up to 8 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 rates and continues with findings regarding the experiences of

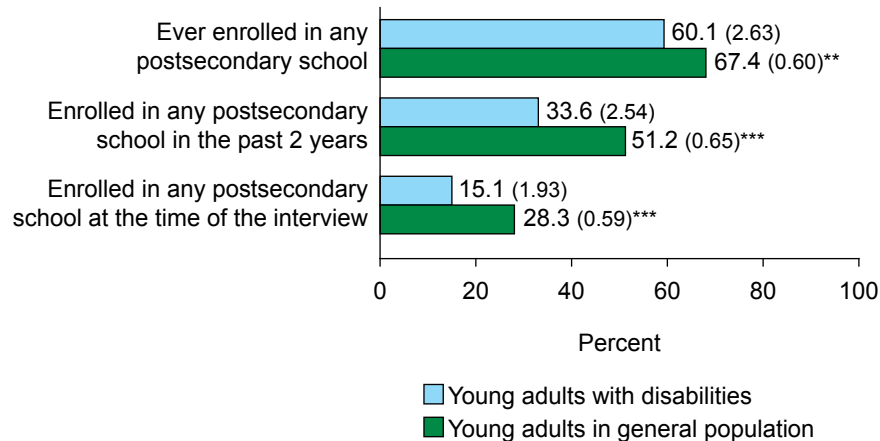
postsecondary students with disabilities, including their courses of study, receipt of accommodations and modifications, and rates of completion. These findings are presented for young adults with disabilities as a whole and for those who differ in length of time out of high school, high school completion status, disability category, gender, parents’ 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 young adults in the general population, “postsecondary enrollments are at an all-time high” (Ewell and Wellman 2007, p. 2). Of young adults with disabilities, 60 percent were reported to have continued on to postsecondary education within 8 years of leaving high school.²⁹ The percentage of similar-age young adults in the general population who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school was higher than that of young adults³⁰ with disabilities (67 percent, $p < .01$; figure 1).

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



** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ for the 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 with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 4,800 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 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2009; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2005 youth survey, responses for 21- to 25-year-olds.

²⁹ Respondents were asked, “Since leaving high school have you [has YOUTH] taken any classes from a [postsecondary school]?”

³⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2005 youth survey, responses for 21- to 25-year-olds.

Thirty-four percent of young adults with disabilities who were out of high school up to 8 years were reported to have been enrolled in a postsecondary program in the 2 years prior to the interview, and 15 percent were enrolled at the time they were interviewed. By both measures, young adults in the general population were more likely than young adults with disabilities to be enrolled. Approximately half (51 percent) of young adults in the general population had been enrolled in college in the 2 years prior to the interview, and 28 percent were enrolled at the time they were interviewed³¹ ($p < .001$ for both comparisons).

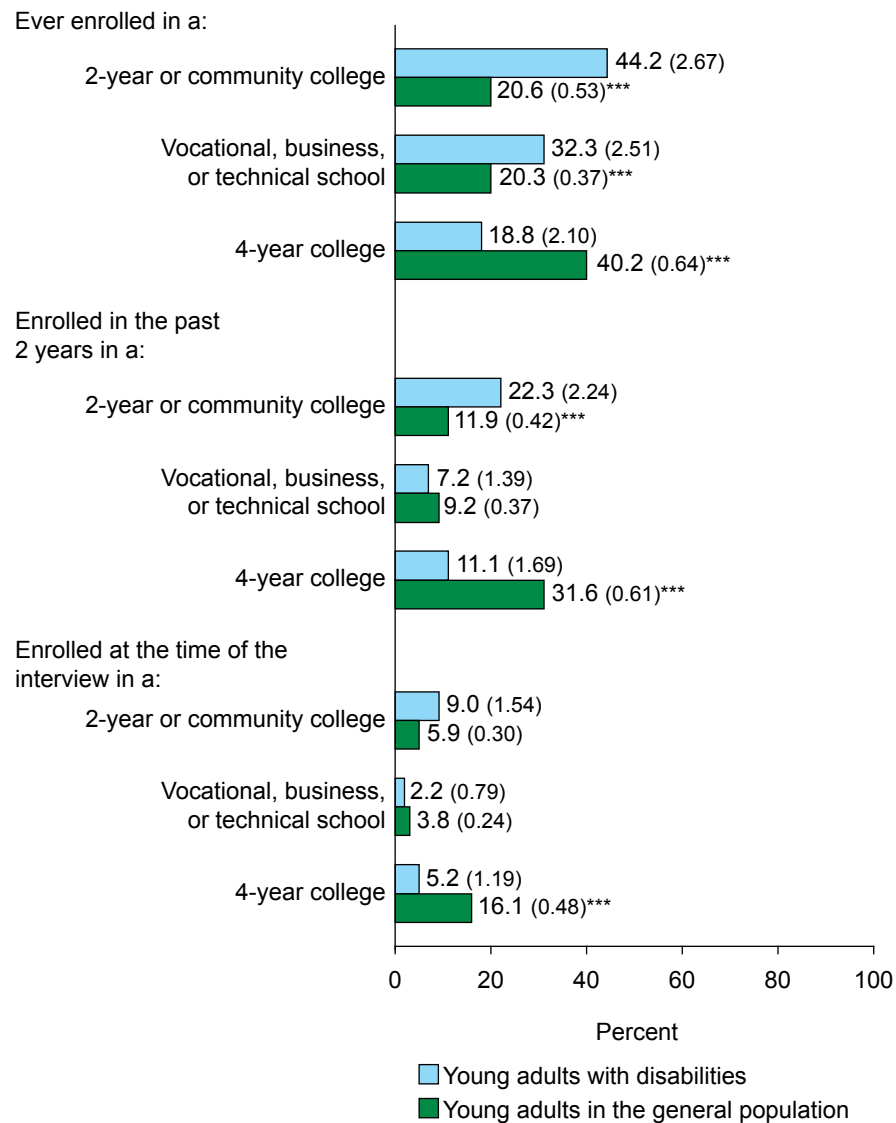
Rates of enrollment varied by type of postsecondary program. Among young adults with disabilities, enrollment in 2-year or community colleges since leaving high school (44 percent) was more common than enrollment in postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools (32 percent, $p < .001$), and enrollment in both of these categories of institutions was more common than enrollment in 4-year colleges or universities (19 percent, $p < .001$ for both comparisons; figure 2).

Young adults with disabilities were more likely than same-age young adults in the general population to have attended a 2-year college or a postsecondary vocational school at some point since leaving high school (44 percent vs. 21 percent and 32 percent vs. 20 percent, $p < .001$ for both comparisons). In contrast, young adults in the general population were more likely to have attended a 4-year college (40 percent vs. 19 percent, $p < .001$). These patterns of differences also are found for enrollment in 2-year and 4-year institutions in the 2 years before the interview (22 percent vs. 12 percent at 2-year colleges and 11 percent vs. 32 percent at 4-year colleges, $p < .001$ for both comparisons) and for enrollment in 4-year institutions at the time of the interview (16 percent vs. 5 percent, $p < .001$).

Almost one-third (31 percent) of young adults with disabilities had enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary institution since leaving high school (not in the table). In comparison, 29 percent reported having attended only one type of postsecondary school since high school.

³¹ Respondents were asked, “Are you [is YOUTH] going to a [postsecondary school] now?” Those who had been enrolled in a postsecondary school but were not currently enrolled were asked, “Are you [is YOUTH] not going to a [postsecondary school] now because you are [YOUTH is]: 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 young adults with disabilities and young adults in the general population, by school type



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

NOTE: Young adults who had enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary school were included in each type of school they had attended. Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 4,800 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 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2009; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2005 youth survey, responses for 21- to 25-year-olds.

Disability Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment

Enrollment in postsecondary programs varied widely by disability category (table 2), with percentages ranging from 30 percent to 75 percent. Having ever enrolled was significantly more common among young adults in every disability category except one (multiple disabilities) than among young adults with mental retardation ($p < .01$ for all comparisons). In addition, such enrollment was significantly more common among young adults with learning disabilities

(67 percent); speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments (67 percent, 75 percent, 71 percent, 62 percent, and 66 percent, respectively); or traumatic brain injuries (61 percent) than among those with multiple disabilities (33 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons). Such enrollment also was more common among those with learning disabilities or speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments than among those with autism (44 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons); and more common among those with hearing or visual impairments than among those with emotional disturbance (53 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons).

Table 2. Postsecondary school enrollment 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											
Ever enrolled in:												
Any postsecondary school	66.8 (3.89)	66.9 (3.63)	28.7 (3.60)	53.0 (4.53)	74.7 (4.24)	71.0 (5.00)	62.0 (4.42)	65.7 (4.04)	43.9 (4.65)	61.0 (7.37)	32.8 (5.07)	56.8 (7.09)
2-year or community college	49.9 (4.13)	46.0 (3.84)	18.9 (3.12)	37.7 (4.40)	51.5 (4.88)	51.5 (5.52)	50.3 (4.56)	51.6 (4.25)	32.2 (4.38)	42.2 (7.47)	21.7 (4.45)	36.9 (6.91)
Vocational, business, or technical school	35.8 (3.96)	28.5 (3.48)	16.4 (2.94)	33.3 (4.28)	42.9 (4.84)	26.2 (4.84)	26.2 (4.08)	32.2 (3.98)	21.0 (3.82)	36.9 (7.30)	17.5 (4.10)	22.1 (6.21)
4-year college	21.2 (3.38)	32.5 (3.61)	6.7 (1.99)	10.8 (2.82)	33.8 (4.62)	40.1 (5.40)	26.1 (4.00)	19.6 (3.38)	17.4 (3.56)	18.5 (5.88)	7.4 (2.83)	23.7 (6.09)

NOTE: Young adults who had enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary school were included in each type of school they had attended. Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 4,770 to 4,810 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 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey 2009.

Consistent with the pattern for overall enrollment, percentages of young adults ever having enrolled in 2-year or community colleges were higher among those with learning disabilities (50 percent); speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments (46 percent, 52 percent, 52 percent, 50 percent, 52 percent, respectively); traumatic brain injuries (42 percent); or deaf-blindness (37 percent) than among those with mental retardation (19 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons). Two-year or community college enrollment was also higher among those with learning disabilities or speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments than among those with multiple disabilities (22 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons); and higher among those with learning disabilities or hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments than among those with autism (32 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons).

Similarly, ever having enrolled in a 4-year college was more common among young adults with learning disabilities (21 percent); speech/language, hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments (33 percent, 34 percent, 40 percent, 26 percent, and 20 percent respectively); or deaf-blindness (24 percent) than among young adults with mental retardation (7 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparison). Four-year college enrollment also was more common for young adults in all these categories except other health impairments and traumatic brain injuries than it was for

young adults with multiple disabilities (7 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons). Young adults with speech/language, hearing, visual, or orthopedic impairments also were more likely than young adults with emotional disturbances (11 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons) ever to have attended a 4-year college. In addition, those with speech/language, hearing, or visual impairments were more likely than those with autism (17 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons); those with hearing or visual impairments also were more likely than those with other health impairments ($p < .01$ for both comparisons); and those with visual impairments also were more likely than those with learning disabilities, orthopedic impairments, or traumatic brain injury ($p < .01$ for all comparisons) ever to have enrolled in a 4-year college.

Young adults with learning disabilities (36 percent), emotional disturbances (33 percent), hearing or other health impairments (43 percent and 32 percent, respectively), or traumatic brain injury (37 percent) also were more likely than young adults with mental retardation (16 percent) or multiple disabilities (18 percent) to ever have been enrolled in vocational, business, or technical school ($p < .01$ for all comparisons). In addition, young adults with hearing impairments were more likely than those with autism (21 percent) to have attended these types of schools ($p < .01$)

Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Secondary school completers were more likely to have enrolled in postsecondary school than were noncompleters; 65 percent of completers had attended postsecondary school at some time since leaving high school up to 8 years earlier, compared with 23 percent of noncompleters ($p < .001$; table 3). Differences between high school completers and noncompleters were apparent for enrollment in both 2-year and 4-year colleges (48 percent vs. 13 percent and 21 percent vs. <1 percent, respectively, $p < .001$ for both comparisons) but not in vocational, business, or technical school.

Rates of enrollment in postsecondary school overall or in each type of postsecondary school did not differ significantly by length of time out of high school.

Table 3. Postsecondary school enrollment of young adults with disabilities, by high-school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Non-Completers	Non-completers	Less than 3 years	3 up to 5 years	5 up to 8 years
			Percent		
Ever enrolled in:					
Any postsecondary school	64.5 (2.74)	22.8 (6.85)	52.3 (6.21)	60.0 (4.62)	61.9 (3.61)
2-year or community college	48.0 (2.86)	12.7 (5.44)	37.5 (6.02)	42.1 (4.66)	47.2 (3.72)
Vocational, business, or technical school	34.7 (2.73)	12.3 (5.37)	24.4 (5.34)	33.2 (4.45)	33.4 (3.51)
4-year college	20.9 (2.33)	0.2 (0.73)	13.1 (4.20)	15.9 (3.41)	22.4 (3.10)

NOTE: Young adults who had enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary school were included in each type of school they had attended. Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 4,770 to 4,810 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 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey 2009.

Demographic Differences in Postsecondary School Enrollment

As other studies have found for young adults in the general population (e.g., Corak, Lipps, and Zhao 2005), household income is related to the likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary school. Young adults with disabilities from households with incomes of more than \$50,000 were more likely than those with household incomes of \$25,000 or less ever to have been enrolled in postsecondary education (70 percent vs. 50 percent, $p < .001$; table 4).

Family income differences were apparent in enrollment at 2-year colleges. Young adults from wealthier parent households (those with incomes of more than \$50,000) were more likely than those from lower-income parent households (\$25,000 or less) to have ever enrolled in a 2-year college (53 percent vs. 33 percent, $p < .01$). In contrast, parents' household income was not significantly related to enrollment in vocational, business, or technical schools or 4-year colleges.

In the general population, females had higher 2-year and 4-year college enrollment rates than males (Peter and Horn 2005). In contrast to their peers in the general population, young adults with disabilities' postsecondary enrollment did not differ significantly by gender (60 percent for males and 60 percent for females).

Rates of enrollment in postsecondary schools also did not differ significantly by race or ethnicity for young adults with disabilities. Sixty-two percent of Hispanic, 60 percent of African American, and 61 percent of White young adults with disabilities had ever enrolled in a postsecondary program.

Table 4. Postsecondary school enrollment 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				
Ever enrolled in:								
Any postsecondary school	50.2 (4.66)	58.3 (5.42)	70.3 (3.74)	60.6 (3.14)	59.6 (5.92)	61.7 (8.12)	60.0 (3.26)	60.2 (4.46)
2-year or community college	33.1 (4.39)	45.2 (5.47)	53.1 (4.08)	43.7 (3.18)	44.4 (6.00)	49.5 (8.36)	43.2 (3.30)	46.0 (4.54)
Vocational, business, or technical school	32.6 (4.37)	28.5 (4.96)	36.0 (3.93)	30.7 (2.96)	34.9 (5.75)	37.9 (8.11)	35.1 (3.17)	27.4 (4.07)
4-year college	10.1 (2.81)	18.1 (4.23)	27.1 (3.63)	19.6 (2.55)	19.1 (4.72)	14.6 (5.90)	17.6 (2.53)	20.7 (3.69)

NOTE: Young adults who had enrolled in more than one type of postsecondary school were included in each type of school they had attended. Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 4,770 to 4,810 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 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2009.

Postsecondary School Experiences

The findings reported thus far indicate that young adults 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 young adults' 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.³²

Timing and Intensity of Enrollment

Most students with disabilities who continued on to postsecondary school did so within 6 months of leaving high school.³³ Overall, 41 percent were reported to have enrolled in a postsecondary school within 2 months of leaving high school, 35 percent enrolled within 2.1 to 6 months, 14 percent enrolled within 6.1 to 12 months, and 10 percent waited longer than 1 year before continuing their education (figure 3). The mean time between high school leaving and first postsecondary enrollment was 7.4 months (0.97 SE). However, the median time between leaving high school and enrolling in a postsecondary school was 3 months.

Students waited a mean time of 7.3 months (1.24 SE) to enroll in 2-year colleges; 14.3 months (2.53 SE) for vocational, business, or technical schools; and 12.5 months (2.58 SE) for 4-year institutions. Median values for the months between high school leaving and postsecondary school enrollment were 3 months for both 2- and 4-year colleges and 6 months for vocational, business, or technical schools. Differences in these high school-postsecondary school time gaps are not statistically significant.

Seventy-seven percent of young adults with disabilities who had ever been enrolled in postsecondary school were reported to have been enrolled steadily,³⁴ whereas 23 percent were reported to have taken classes some semesters or quarters but not others (figure 4).³⁵ Seventy-five percent of students at 2-year colleges; 79 percent of students at vocational, business, or

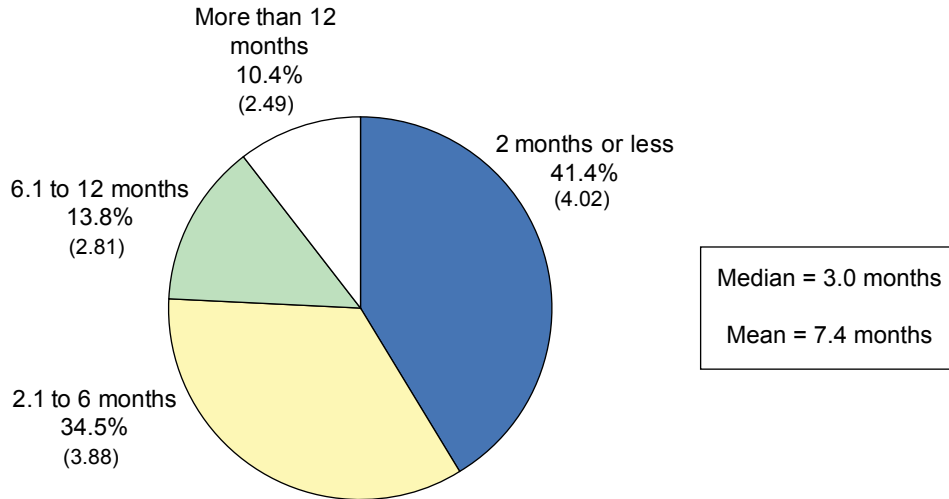
³² Because a relatively small proportion of young adults in the NLTS2 sample (15 percent) were enrolled in postsecondary schools at the time of the Wave 5 interview, data from Waves 2 through 4 were used to augment Wave 5 data for most analyses in this chapter, as follows: If a young adult with disabilities did not attend a postsecondary school in the 2 years preceding the Wave 5 interview, but was reported in a prior wave to have been out of high school and to have attended a postsecondary school, data were taken from the most recent wave in which that young adult was reported to have attended postsecondary school. Augmenting the data in this way increased the sample size sufficiently to allow disaggregated analyses (e.g., by disability category) of variables concerning timing and intensity of enrollment, course of study, receipt of accommodations and supports, and postsecondary school completion.

³³ Respondents were asked, "About how long after leaving high school was it before you [YOUTH] started going to a [postsecondary school]?"

³⁴ For each type of postsecondary school, respondents were asked, "Have you [has YOUTH] been enrolled continuously since you first began at a [type of postsecondary school], not counting time off for vacations, or have you [has YOUTH] been enrolled off and on, taking classes some semesters or quarters but not others?"

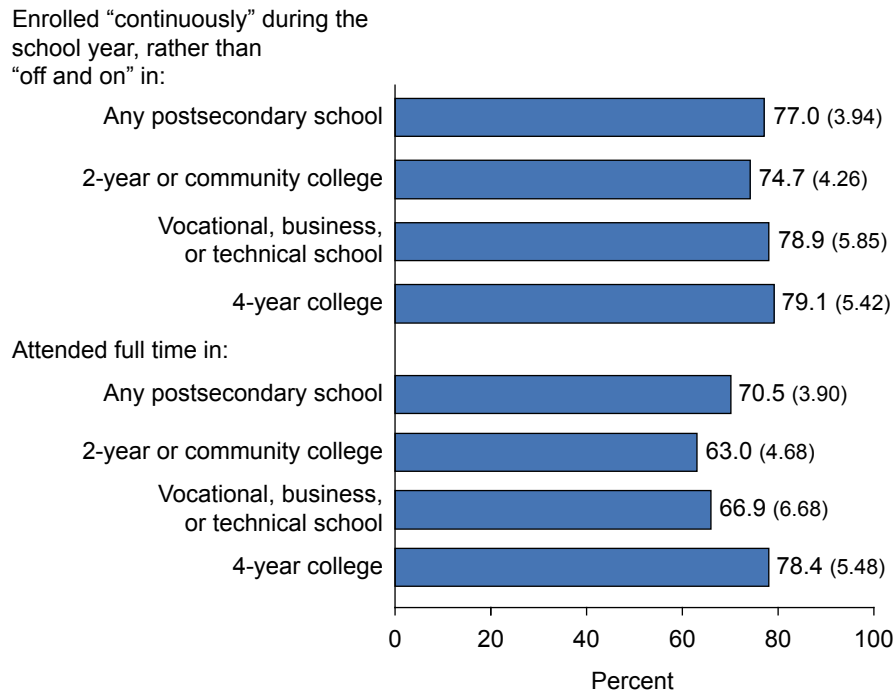
³⁵ Bars in the figure reflect only youth who met the category's criterion (i.e., were enrolled continuously or on a full-time basis); the complements (i.e., were enrolled some semesters or quarters but not others, or enrolled on a part-time basis) are not presented in the figure.

Figure 3. Months elapsed between high school leaving and first postsecondary school enrollment among young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,920 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Figure 4. Intensity of enrollment in postsecondary schools by young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,760 to 2,100 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

technical schools; and 79 percent of students at 4-year institutions were reported to have been enrolled steadily during the school year.

Whether students attend postsecondary school full or part time may help shape their postsecondary experiences; for example, a report on community college student engagement suggested that full-time students were more likely to interact with faculty, academic advisors, or other students than their part-time peers (Inside Higher Ed 2006). Seventy-one percent of young adults with disabilities who ever had attended postsecondary institutions were reported to have attended full time.³⁶ These included 63 percent of students at 2-year colleges; 67 percent of students at vocational, business, or technical schools; and 78 percent of students at 4-year institutions.

Disability Differences in Timing and Intensity of Enrollment

The mean length of time between leaving high school and beginning a postsecondary program ranged from approximately 5 months for students with visual impairments to 11 months for students with multiple disabilities (table 5), with no significant differences between disability

Table 5. Intensity of enrollment of young adults with disabilities 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
Mean number of months between having left high school and began postsecondary school	6.6 (1.22)	6.9 (1.31)	10.0 (2.79)	11.0 (2.16)	5.6 (1.36)	4.8 (1.07)	7.7 (1.50)	9.8 (1.69)	5.8 (1.33)	9.2 (2.68)	10.5 (2.75)	8.4 (3.15)
Median number of months between having left high school and began postsecondary school	3.0	3.0	6.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Percentage enrolled “steadily” during the school year rather than “off and on”	81.9 (4.96)	77.5 (4.78)	44.5 (12.89)	58.0 (7.48)	61.9 (8.22)	77.4 (6.07)	74.6 (5.32)	68.7 (5.75)	85.7 (6.50)	66.7 (10.28)	84.9 (7.33)	76.3 (10.03)
Percentage enrolled full time (12 or more credit hours)	73.6 (5.32)	76.6 (4.47)	45.5 (10.81)	58.8 (7.09)	71.1 (6.49)	81.5 (5.64)	74.7 (5.35)	63.3 (5.63)	72.8 (6.77)	72.5 (9.39)	72.4 (8.21)	64.6 (9.89)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,760 to 2,100 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

³⁶ Respondents were asked, “Are you [is YOUTH] 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.

categories. Median values were 3 months for all disability categories except mental retardation, for which the median value was 6 months. Continuous enrollment during the school year was significantly more common among postsecondary students with learning disabilities (82 percent), autism (86 percent), or multiple disabilities (85 percent) than among those with mental retardation (45 percent, $p < .01$ for all comparisons). In addition, full-time enrollment was significantly more common among postsecondary students with speech/language impairments (77 percent) or visual impairments (82 percent) than among those with mental retardation (46 percent, $p < .01$ for both comparisons).

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 young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in a postsecondary program, by high school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 3 years	3 up to 5 years	5 years or more
Mean number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	7.2 (0.97)	18.4 (5.35)	7.2 (2.79)	7.5 (1.67)	7.4 (1.30)
Median number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	3.0	12.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Percentage enrolled continuously during the school year rather than "off and on"	77.5 (3.98)	43.7 (22.15)	84.9 (9.10)	73.6 (7.33)	77.8 (5.17)
Percentage enrolled full time (at least 12 credit hours)	71.1 (3.95)	30.4 (17.80)	77.0 (9.35)	66.0 (7.35)	72.2 (5.08)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,760 to 2,100 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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 young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in a postsecondary program, 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
Mean number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	8.6 (1.81)	9.0 (2.49)	6.1 (1.21)	7.2 (1.16)	7.7 (2.30)	7.5 (2.66)	8.2 (1.29)	6.1 (1.42)
Median number of months between having left high school and began going to a postsecondary school	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Percentage enrolled continuously during the school year rather than "off and on"	69.1 (8.56)	62.1 (9.88)	86.5 (4.35)	75.0 (4.74)	85.3 (7.77)	74.0 (13.40)	78.5 (4.81)	74.7 (6.75)
Percentage enrolled full time (greater than or equal to 12 credit hours)	70.7 (7.75)	62.4 (8.70)	73.1 (5.22)	67.1 (4.74)	77.0 (8.42)	80.8 (10.58)	68.8 (4.91)	70.6 (6.55)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,760 to 2,100 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

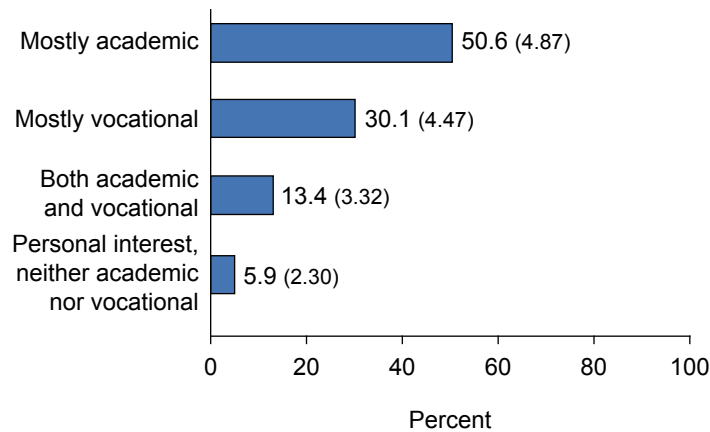
Postsecondary Course of Study

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 51 percent majoring in academic areas and 30 percent in vocational areas ($p < .01$; figure 5).³⁷ Thirteen percent reported both an academic and vocational focus, and 6 percent attended classes primarily for recreation and personal interest.

³⁷ Respondents at 2-year colleges were asked, "Have you [has YOUTH] taken mostly vocational courses to train for a job, like computer or business courses, or have you [has YOUTH] taken mostly academic courses, like English or science?"

Figure 5. Primary focus of courses taken at a 2-year or community college by young adults with disabilities who were ever enrolled in postsecondary school

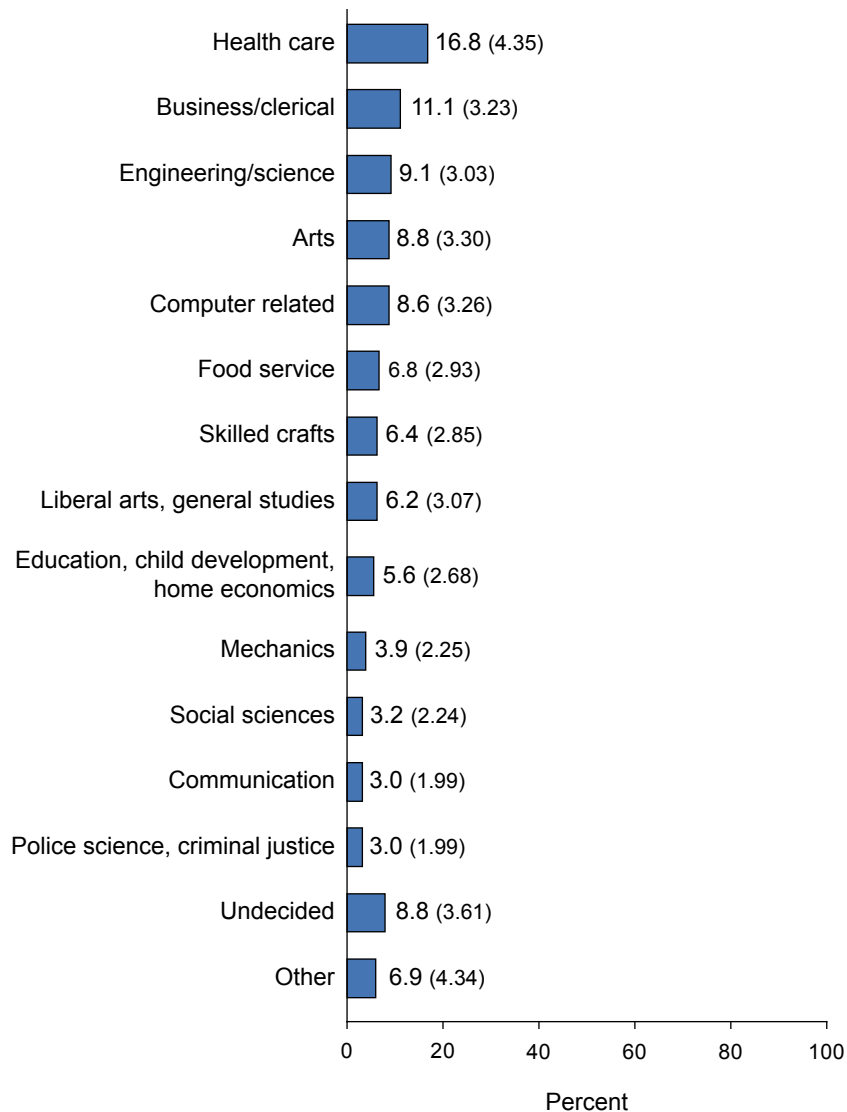


NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,410 young adults with disabilities. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Regardless of type of postsecondary school attended, young adults with disabilities had a range of majors. Among those who had ever been enrolled at 2-year colleges,³⁸ 17 percent majored in a field related to health care; 11 percent majored in business (including marketing, advertising, management, and finance); 9 percent each majored in engineering/science, arts, (visual and performing arts or design), computer-related fields (computer science, programming, information technologies, computer support), or engineering/science; 6 percent or 7 percent each majored in food service or restaurant management, skilled crafts (e.g., plumbing, electrical, carpentry), liberal arts, or general studies and education, (including childcare, early childhood, or home economics), 3 percent to 4 percent each majored in mechanics, social sciences, communications (journalism, television/radio, entertainment industry), and police science or criminal justice (figure 6). Nine percent were undecided about a major and 7 percent were in other majors.

³⁸ Respondents who had attended 2-year colleges were asked, “What is [was] your [YOUTH’s] major or primary course of study in a 2-year or community college?”

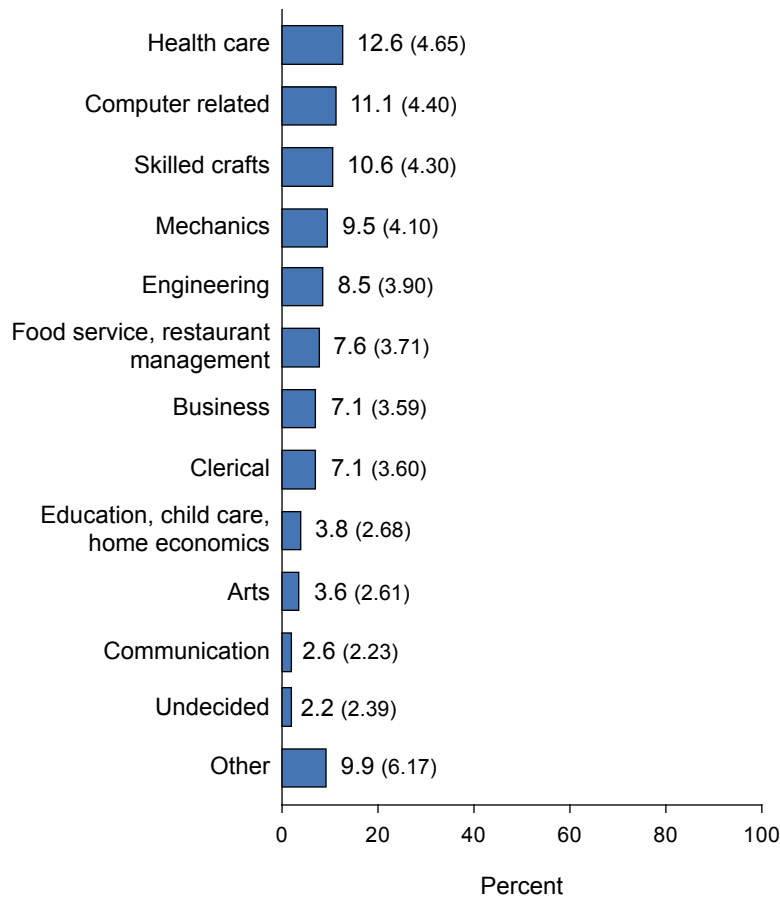
Figure 6. Major or primary course of study of young adults with disabilities ever enrolled at a 2-year or community college



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,110 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Among young adults with disabilities who had attended vocational, business, or technical schools, the most common majors also were in the health care field (13 percent), followed by computer-related fields and skilled crafts (11 percent each); mechanics (10 percent); engineering (9 percent); food service or restaurant management (8 percent); business or clerical (7 percent each); education, child care, or home economics and arts (4 percent each); and communication (3 percent; figure 7). Approximately 2 percent were undecided, and 10 percent had majors in a range of other fields.

Figure 7. Major or primary course of study of young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in a vocational, business, or technical school

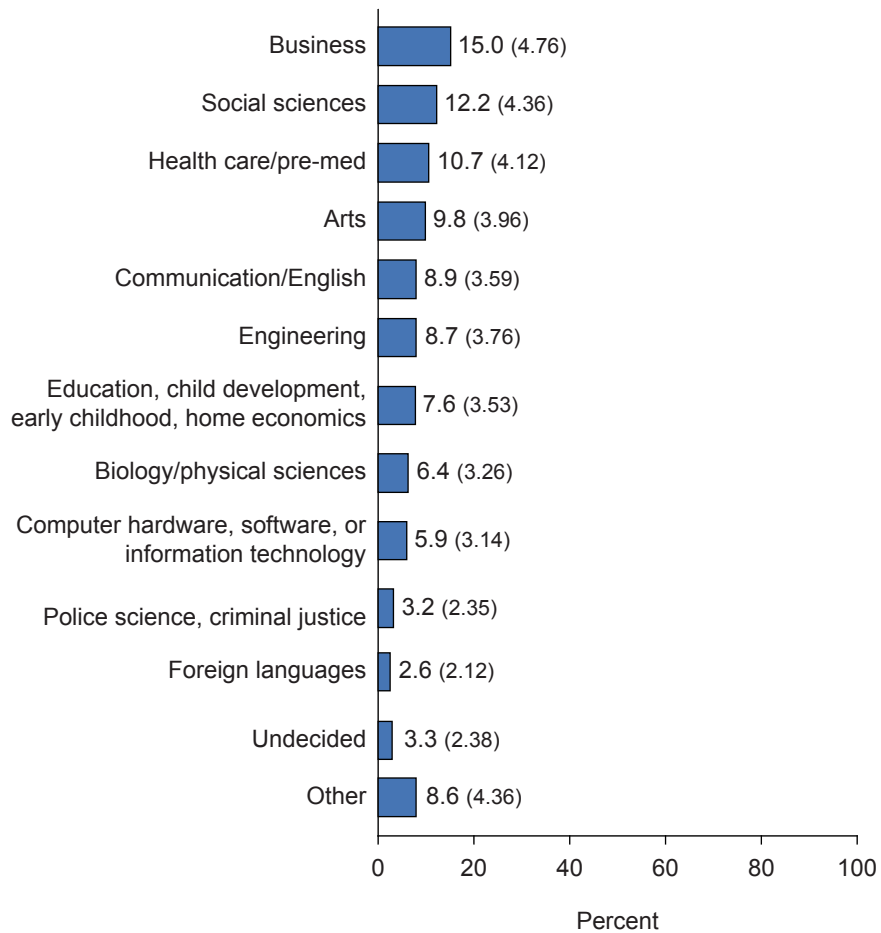


NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 540 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Business-related majors were most common among young adults with disabilities who had attended 4-year colleges (15 percent), followed by social sciences (12 percent); medical and health-related majors (11 percent); arts (10 percent); engineering or communication (9 percent each); education, child development, early childhood, or home economics (8 percent); sciences (biological or physical) or computer-related majors (6 percent each); and police science or criminal justice or foreign languages (3 percent each; figure 8). Nine percent were in other majors or had not yet chosen a major, and 3 percent were undecided in their area of focus.

Figure 8. Major or primary course of study of young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in a 4-year college or university



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 840 young adults with disabilities.

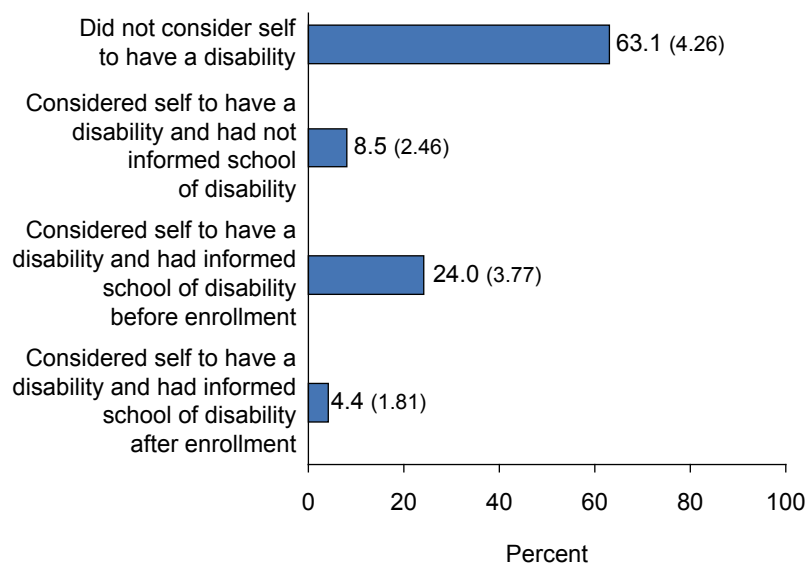
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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 almost two-thirds (63 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 9).³⁹ An additional 9 percent reported considering themselves to have a disability but chose not to disclose it to their postsecondary schools. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) of postsecondary students with disabilities identified themselves as having a disability and had informed their postsecondary schools of their disability before enrollment, and 4 percent considered themselves to have a disability and had waited to inform the postsecondary schools of their disability until after enrollment.⁴⁰

Figure 9. Extent to which young adults 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 young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 1,960 young adults with disabilities.

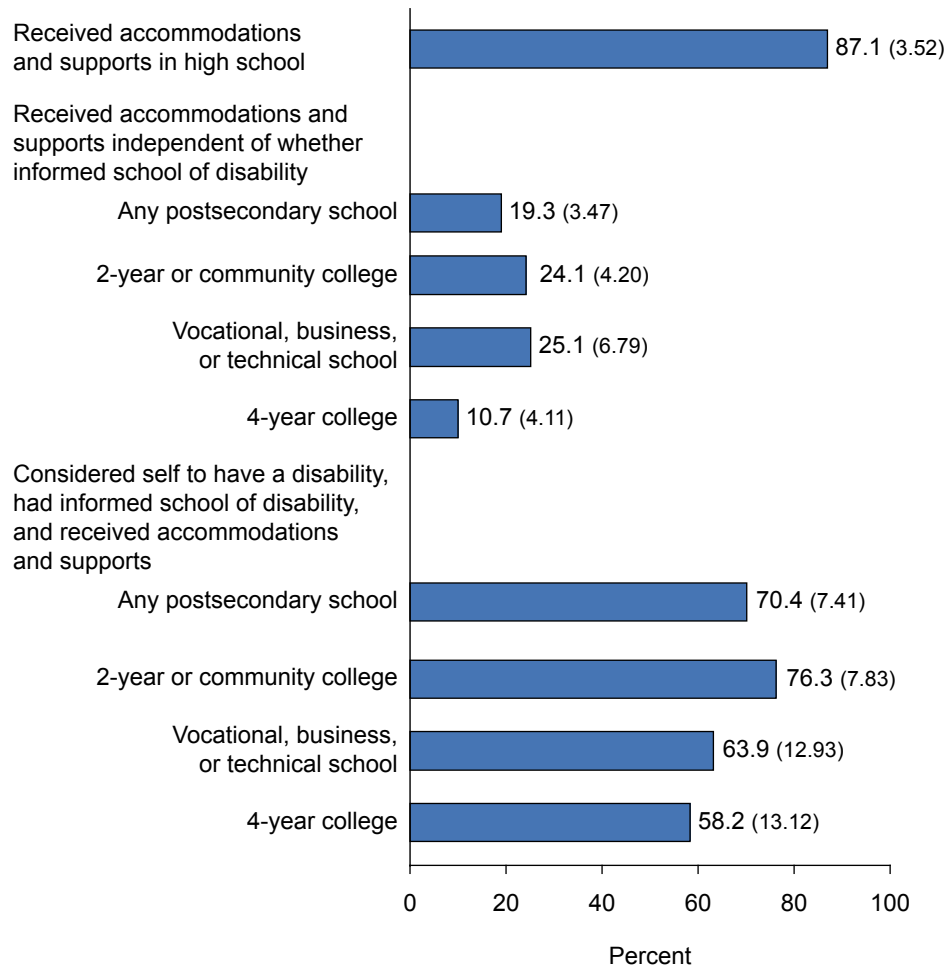
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

³⁹ Young adult 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?”

⁴⁰ Young adult 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 28 percent of postsecondary students who were considered by their secondary schools as having a disability disclosed a disability to their postsecondary schools (sum of third and fourth bars in figure 9). Less than one in five (19 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 10).⁴¹

Figure 10. Receipt of accommodations and supports from school because of disability by young adults with disabilities ever enrolled in postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 300 to 2,010 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 1 school program survey, 2002, and Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

⁴¹ Respondents were asked, “Have you [YOUTH] 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 four times as many (87 percent) received some type of accommodation or support because of a disability ($p < .001$).⁴² 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; 11 percent of postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school students; and 24 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 28 percent of students who had disclosed a disability to their postsecondary programs, 70 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 (70 percent vs. 92 percent, $p < .01$).⁴³

The rate of receiving accommodations and supports in postsecondary schools for those who had disclosed a disability ranged from 58 percent at 4-year colleges or universities to 64 percent at vocational, business, or technical schools and 76 percent at 2-year or community colleges. Of those who considered themselves to have a disability and had not received accommodations or supports related to their disability from their postsecondary schools, 17 percent had applied for this type of assistance.

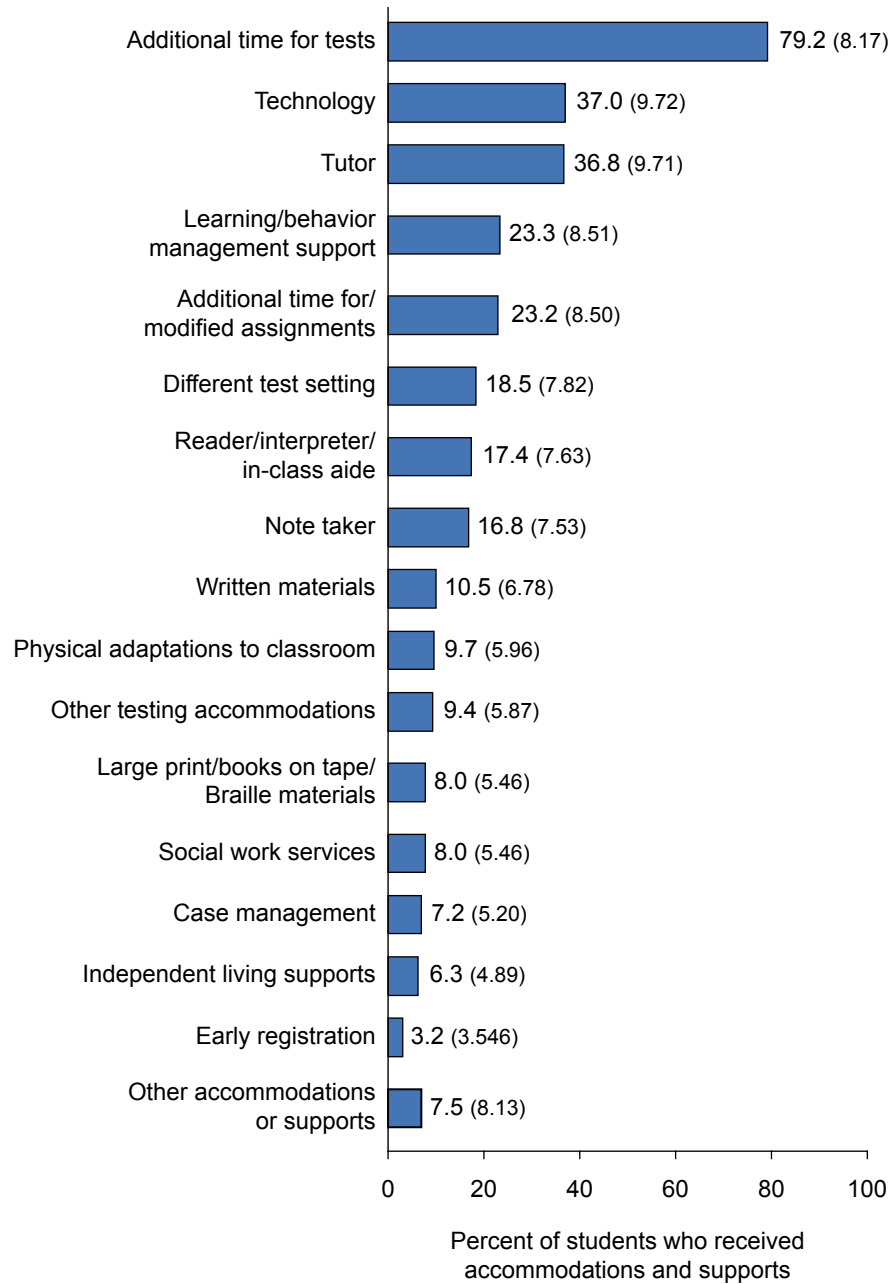
Postsecondary students who were given assistance because of their disability were reported to have received a range of accommodations, supports, and services from their schools.⁴⁴ Additional time to complete tests was a frequent type of assistance—received by approximately two-thirds (79 percent) of those who got accommodations, supports, and services (figure 11). Tests were administered in a different-than-usual setting for 19 percent, and 9 percent were provided with other testing accommodations. Thirty-seven percent used technology aids, such as computer software designed for students with disabilities, or had tutors. Seventeen percent received help from note takers or received help from a reader, interpreter, or in-class aide. Approximately one-quarter (23 percent) received learning strategies, study skills, or behavior management support. Assignments were modified or deadlines were extended for 23 percent of postsecondary students who received some type of assistance. Eleven percent received written materials, and less than 10 percent received physical adaptations to their classrooms, large print or Braille materials and books on tape, social work services, case management, independent living supports, or early registration.

⁴² Source for accommodations and supports received by postsecondary students when they were in high school: 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 high school students who had eventually enrolled in postsecondary school.

⁴³ Source for accommodations and supports received in high school by postsecondary students who disclosed a disability to their postsecondary school: 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 eventually enrolled in postsecondary schools and had disclosed a disability to their postsecondary school.

⁴⁴ Respondents who indicated that they received help from their school because of a disability were asked, “What services, accommodations, or other help have you [YOUTH] received?”

Figure 11. Types of accommodations and supports received from postsecondary schools by young adults with disabilities who had ever enrolled in a postsecondary school and had received these types of assistance



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 710 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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, students with disabilities also frequently received testing modifications 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 less likely in postsecondary school than in high school to receive additional time for or modifications to assignments (23 percent vs. 86 percent, $p < .001$).⁴⁵

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—regardless of whether the assistance was related to their disability—44 percent had received some type of help (figure 12).⁴⁶ Of those students who had received help, 70 percent received tutoring assistance and approximately one-quarter sought help from a study or writing center (27 percent and 24 percent, respectively; not presented in figure). Rates of receiving assistance with schoolwork ranged from 32 percent for those at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools to 41 percent for those at 4-year colleges or universities.

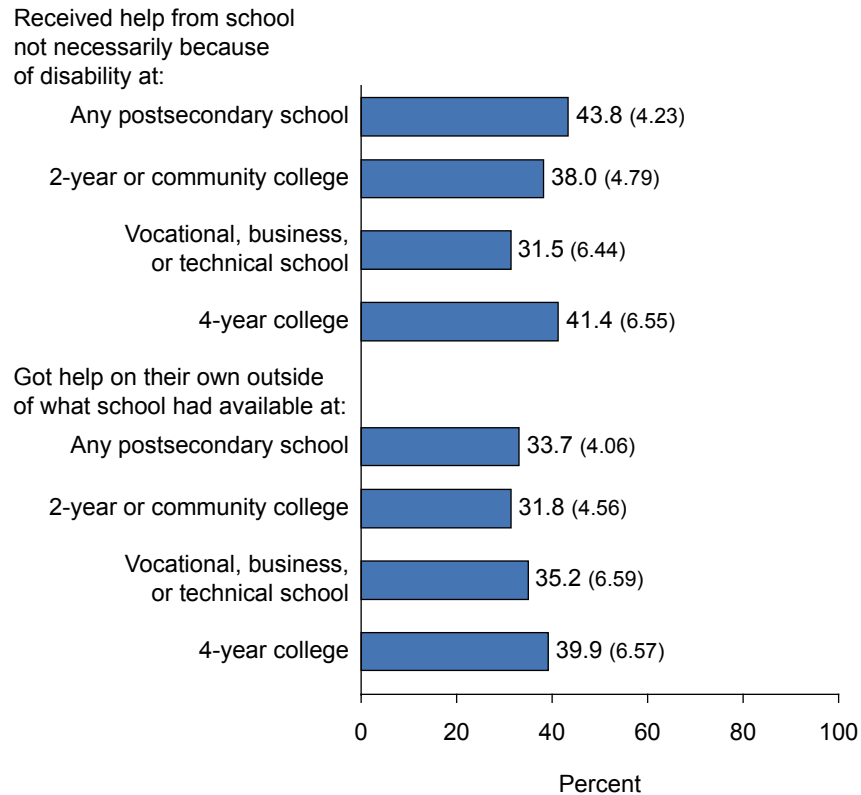
Some students also sought help on their own outside of what their postsecondary schools provided.⁴⁷ Approximately one-third (34 percent) had got help on their own. Forty percent of 4-year college students were reported to have received help with their schoolwork beyond that provided by their schools, as were 35 percent of postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school students and 32 percent of community college students.

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ Respondents were asked, “Did you [YOUTH] ever get help with school work from this school, like going to a tutor or a study center or writing center?”

⁴⁷ Respondents were asked, “Besides what the school had available, have you [YOUTH] gotten any services or help on your own to help you do your best at school?”

Figure 12. Receipt of help with schoolwork by young adults with disabilities who had ever enrolled in a postsecondary school



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,010 to 2,110 young adults with disabilities.

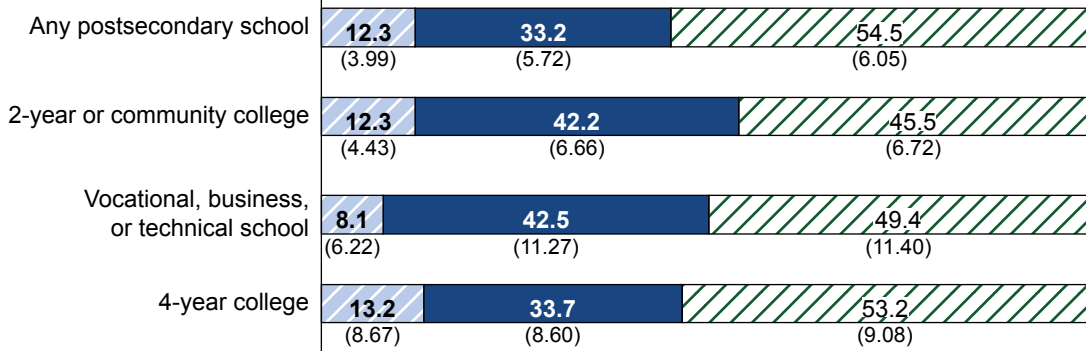
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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 what the schools provided—were asked to rate how useful those supports were in helping them stay in school and do their best,⁴⁸ 33 percent reported that the supports were “somewhat useful,” and 55 percent rated them as “very useful” (figure 13). Twelve percent 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 46 percent at 2-year or community colleges to 53 percent at 4-year colleges.

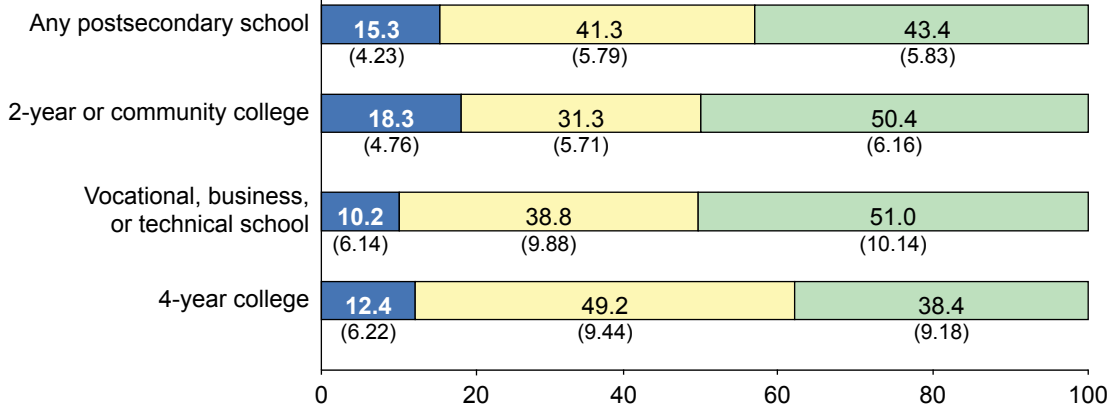
⁴⁸ Young adult respondents were asked, “How useful have the services, accommodations, and help with schoolwork been in helping you stay in school and do your best there?” Response categories were “very useful,” “somewhat useful,” “not very useful,” or “not at all useful.”

Figure 13. Perceptions of assistance with schoolwork by young adults with disabilities who ever had enrolled in postsecondary school and had received assistance

Young adults who received any help with schoolwork rated usefulness of help from:



Young adults who received any help with schoolwork rated sufficiency of help from:



Percent of students who received help, accommodations, or support with schoolwork

■ Not at all or not very useful
 ■ Somewhat useful
 ▨ Very useful
■ Definitely or probably not getting enough
 ■ Probably getting enough
 ■ Definitely getting enough

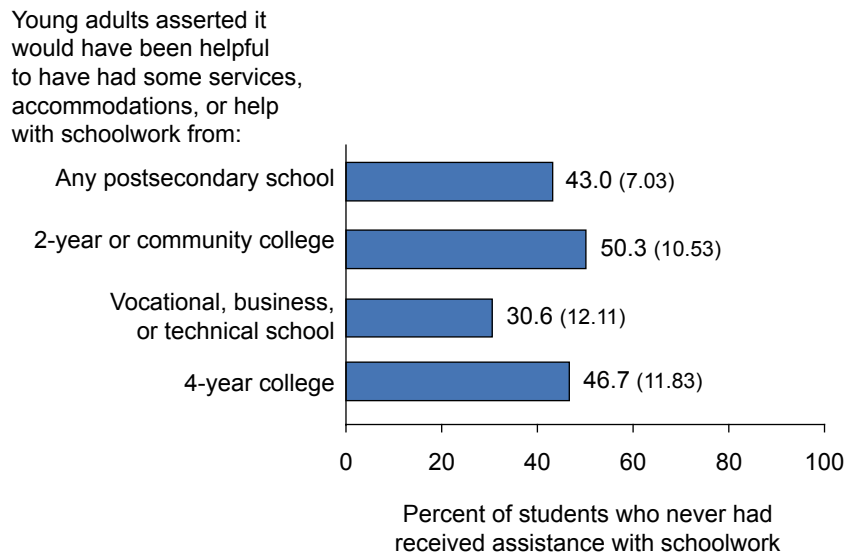
NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Response categories “not at all useful” and “not very useful” and “probably not getting enough” and “definitely not getting enough” have been collapsed for reporting purposes. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 320 to 1,270 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Students who had received assistance also were asked whether they thought they were receiving enough help to do their best at school.⁴⁹ Of students who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school, 41 percent reported they “probably” were, and 43 percent reported they “definitely” were getting enough assistance, whereas 15 percent reported they “definitely” or “probably” were not getting enough help ($p < .001$ for comparisons with “probably” and “definitely” get enough assistance). Thirty-eight percent of students with disabilities at 4-year colleges or universities, 50 percent of those at 2-year colleges, and 51 percent of those at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools stated they were “definitely getting enough” services, accommodations, or help with schoolwork.

The 38 percent of postsecondary students who had not received any type of help with their schoolwork—neither accommodations nor supports from the schools independent of a disability or because of a disability nor help outside what the schools provided—were asked whether it would have been helpful to have had some assistance.⁵⁰ Forty-three percent reported it would have been helpful to have had additional assistance (figure 14). Almost one-third (31 percent) at vocational, business, or technical schools; 47 percent at 4-year colleges or universities; and 50 percent at 2-year or community colleges reported the need for additional help with schoolwork.

Figure 14. Perceptions of need for assistance with schoolwork by young adults with disabilities who ever had enrolled in postsecondary school and had not received assistance



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 160 to 580 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), Waves 4 and 5 youth interview/surveys, 2007 and 2009.

⁴⁹ Young adults were asked, “Do you think you are getting enough services, accommodations, or help with schoolwork to do your best there?” Response categories were “definitely getting enough,” “probably getting enough,” “probably not getting enough,” or “definitely not getting enough.”

⁵⁰ Young adult respondents were asked, “Would it have been helpful to you to have had some services, accommodations, or help with schoolwork?”

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 19 percent to 74 percent (table 8). Students with speech/language impairments (74 percent), learning disabilities (69 percent), or other health impairments (65 percent) were more likely to have reported not considering themselves as having a disability than were those with orthopedic (19 percent), visual (21 percent), or hearing impairments (32 percent); autism (24 percent); multiple disabilities (26 percent); or deaf-blindness (32 percent) ($p < .001$ for all comparisons other than with deaf-blindness and $p < .01$ for all comparisons with deaf-blindness). Students with speech/language impairments or learning disabilities also were more likely to have reported not considering themselves as having a disability than were those with traumatic brain injuries (37 percent, $p < .01$ for both comparisons) or mental retardation (37 percent, $p < .01$ for comparison with speech/language impairment only). In addition, students with emotional disturbances (53 percent) were more likely than those with visual or orthopedic impairments ($p < .01$ for both comparisons) to view themselves as not having a disability.

A similar pattern of disability differences was apparent for those who had informed their postsecondary schools of a disability. Students with orthopedic or visual impairments (76 percent and 73 percent, respectively), multiple disabilities (71 percent), deaf-blindness (68 percent), autism (63 percent), or hearing impairments (59 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 (17 percent), learning disabilities (24 percent), other health impairments (25 percent), or emotional disturbances (27 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons). Students with mental retardation (58 percent) also were more likely to disclose a disability than were those with learning disabilities ($p < .01$) or speech/language or other health impairments ($p < .001$ for both comparisons). In addition, students with traumatic brain injuries (48 percent) were more likely to disclose their disability than those with speech/language impairments ($p < .01$).

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 12 percent to 60 percent (table 9). Students with deaf-blindness (60 percent); visual (59 percent), hearing (53 percent), or orthopedic impairments (55 percent); or multiple disabilities (46 percent) were more likely to receive accommodations or supports because of a disability than were those with speech/language impairments (12 percent), other health impairments (15 percent), or learning disabilities (17 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons). Students with deaf-blindness or visual, hearing, or orthopedic impairments also were more likely to receive disability-related accommodations than were those with emotional disturbances (20 percent, $p < .001$ for all comparisons). In addition, students with visual or orthopedic impairments were more likely to receive accommodations than were students with mental retardation (24 percent, $p < .001$ for both comparisons).

The rate of receiving help with schoolwork overall—whether or not specifically due to a disability—did not differ across disability categories, with two exceptions. Students with traumatic brain injuries (70 percent) were more likely to receive help than were those with autism (36 percent) or emotional disturbances (37 percent, $p < .01$ for both comparisons).

2. Postsecondary Education

Table 8. Extent to which young adults 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											
Young adult did not consider self to have a disability	68.9 (5.84)	74.0 (4.87)	37.1 (10.95)	52.5 (7.64)	31.6 (6.29)	20.8 (5.94)	18.5 (4.86)	64.9 (5.75)	23.9 (6.90)	37.4 (10.51)	25.9 (8.15)	32.4 (10.08)
Young adult considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	24.2 (5.40)	16.6 (4.13)	57.8 (11.20)	26.8 (6.78)	59.4 (6.64)	73.0 (6.50)	76.1 (5.34)	25.4 (5.24)	62.7 (7.83)	47.8 (10.85)	70.7 (8.47)	67.6 (10.08)
Young adult considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	6.9 (3.20)	9.4 (3.24)	5.1 (4.99)	20.7 (6.20)	9.0 (3.87)	6.2 (3.53)	5.4 (2.83)	9.7 (3.57)	13.4 (5.51)	14.8 (7.71)	3.4 (3.37)	#

Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 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 1,960 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Table 9. Receipt of accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork by young adults 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	17.0 (4.67)	12.4 (3.62)	24.4 (9.62)	19.8 (6.07)	53.0 (6.48)	59.3 (7.17)	54.5 (6.19)	14.5 (4.21)	34.6 (7.35)	34.2 (10.05)	45.9 (9.31)	59.9 (10.41)
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	43.2 (5.94)	44.5 (5.25)	50.0 (10.73)	37.3 (6.95)	51.7 (7.19)	43.4 (7.17)	54.4 (6.12)	49.0 (5.86)	35.6 (7.25)	70.2 (9.62)	56.8 (9.19)	51.7 (10.33)
Student got help on own	33.4 (5.68)	34.5 (5.05)	42.3 (10.54)	28.0 (6.52)	40.0 (7.11)	52.0 (7.35)	37.4 (5.93)	29.2 (5.36)	33.8 (7.23)	30.7 (9.44)	53.8 (9.22)	47.6 (10.33)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 2,010 to 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Students' rate of receiving help with schoolwork outside of what was provided by their postsecondary schools did not differ significantly across disability categories.

Students' perceptions of their accommodations, supports, and help with schoolwork did not differ significantly by disability category, except that young adults with hearing impairments were more likely than those with orthopedic impairments to describe the help they received as being "not at all or not very useful" (39 percent vs. 9 percent, $p < .01$; table 10).

Assertion of the need for help with schoolwork by those who had not received assistance did not differ significantly by disability category.

Table 10. Perceptions of assistance with schoolwork by young adults 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											
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:												
Very useful	54.6 (8.59)	43.3 (7.24)	73.0 (12.66)	51.2 (10.92)	46.8 (9.76)	59.8 (8.14)	62.2 (6.56)	54.8 (7.78)	49.3 (10.78)	54.3 (12.36)	54.3 (11.38)	‡
Somewhat useful	36.9 (8.32)	40.4 (7.17)	8.3 (7.87)	23.6 (9.28)	14.3 (6.84)	25.6 (7.24)	28.8 (6.13)	27.1 (6.94)	27.6 (9.64)	36.2 (11.93)	15.2 (8.20)	‡
Not at all or not very useful	8.5 (4.81)	16.3 (5.39)	18.7 (11.1)	25.2 (9.49)	39.0 (9.54)	14.6 (5.86)	9.0 (3.87)	18.1 (6.02)	23.2 (9.10)	9.5 (7.28)	30.5 (10.51)	‡
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:												
Definitely getting enough	42.8 (8.13)	51.8 (7.26)	39.0 (13.69)	36.5 (10.06)	51.5 (9.73)	62.5 (7.99)	53.1 (6.79)	45.4 (7.58)	36.7 (11.33)	45.8 (12.15)	53.6 (11.14)	‡
Probably getting enough	42.4 (8.12)	38.8 (7.08)	34.9 (13.38)	45.1 (10.40)	28.2 (8.76)	21.3 (6.76)	36.8 (6.56)	40.6 (7.47)	53.4 (11.73)	34.6 (11.60)	32.8 (10.49)	‡
Probably or definitely not getting enough	14.8 (5.84)	9.4 (4.24)	26.1 (12.33)	18.4 (8.09)	20.3 (7.83)	16.3 (6.10)	10.1 (4.10)	14.0 (5.28)	9.9 (7.02)	19.6 (9.68)	13.6 (7.66)	‡
Young adults who never received any help with schoolwork thought assistance would have been helpful												
	43.6 (9.38)	42.2 (8.46)	‡	31.7 (10.50)	41.9 (13.00)	30.6 (12.47)	49.4 (10.30)	32.2 (9.21)	54.1 (12.58)	‡	‡	‡

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 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 1,230 to 1,270 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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 young adults with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school, by highest level of educational attainment

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 3 years	3 up to 5 years	5 up to 8 years
	Percent				
Disclosure of disability					
Did not consider self to have a disability	63.5 (4.33)	42.1 (20.76)	47.7 (11.98)	62.0 (7.75)	66.6 (5.49)
Considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	28.1 (4.04)	40.3 (20.62)	42.7 (11.87)	31.1 (7.39)	24.0 (4.97)
Considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	8.4 (2.49)	17.6 (16.01)	9.6 (7.07)	6.9 (4.05)	9.4 (3.40)
Receipt of accommodations and supports					
Received from school because of disability, independent of informing school of disability	19.4 (3.53)	12.4 (13.88)	36.9 (11.39)	22.1 (6.64)	14.3 (4.03)
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	13.5 (13.79)	44.4 (4.31)	41.8 (10.97)	44.5 (7.68)	43.8 (5.63)
Got help on own	33.9 (4.14)	27.5 (18.13)	29.3 (10.13)	34.0 (7.31)	34.4 (5.45)
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:					
Very useful	54.2 (6.11)	‡	56.5 (15.67)	54.4 (10.90)	54.2 (7.92)
Somewhat useful	33.5 (5.79)	‡	35.7 (15.15)	36.8 (10.56)	29.8 (7.27)
Not at all or not very useful	12.3 (4.03)	‡	7.8 (8.48)	8.8 (6.20)	16.0 (5.83)
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:					
Definitely getting enough	43.0 (5.92)	‡	49.1 (15.79)	36.4 (10.39)	47.1 (7.61)
Probably getting enough	41.7 (5.90)	‡	33.3 (14.89)	52.3 (10.79)	35.3 (7.29)
Probably or definitely not getting enough	15.4 (4.32)	‡	17.5 (12.00)	11.3 (6.84)	17.6 (5.81)
Young adults who never received any help with school work thought assistance would have been helpful					
	43.5 (7.13)	‡	57.0 (20.28)	35.8 (11.18)	46.3 (9.84)

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,230 to 1,270 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), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

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 young adults with disabilities who had ever enrolled in postsecondary school, by parents' household income and young adults' 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								
Disclosure of disability								
Did not consider self to have a disability	66.4 (8.04)	64.2 (8.92)	59.9 (5.94)	61.1 (5.05)	65.3 (9.80)	70.1 (12.77)	57.8 (5.47)	71.8 (6.57)
Considered self to have a disability and had informed school of disability	27.6 (7.61)	27.4 (8.30)	30.3 (5.57)	29.5 (4.72)	28.3 (9.27)	23.0 (11.74)	32.1 (5.17)	22.2 (6.07)
Considered self to have a disability and had not informed school of disability	6.1 (4.07)	8.4 (5.16)	9.8 (3.60)	9.4 (3.02)	6.4 (5.04)	6.9 (7.07)	10.1 (3.34)	6.0 (3.47)
Receipt of accommodations and supports								
Received from school because of disability, independent of informing school of disability	19.5 (6.89)	17.2 (6.95)	21.1 (4.91)	19.6 (4.06)	18.0 (8.05)	19.8 (11.11)	21.9 (4.52)	15.1 (5.27)
Received help with schoolwork from school overall	39.2 (8.32)	36.5 (8.58)	50.1 (5.90)	36.9 (4.84)	64.2 (9.58)	47.1 (13.35)	39.6 (5.18)	50.8 (7.18)
Got help on own	31.0 (7.96)	35.9 (8.57)	33.6 (5.60)	31.3 (4.67)	44.6 (10.07)	27.6 (12.13)	31.3 (4.96)	37.4 (6.94)
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork rated the help as:								
Very useful	59.0 (11.28)	67.7 (12.91)	46.4 (8.38)	49.0 (7.28)	59.4 (12.92)	70.6 (16.46)	50.3 (8.02)	59.5 (9.10)
Somewhat useful	28.5 (10.36)	21.1 (11.26)	40.8 (8.26)	35.1 (6.95)	35.1 (12.56)	19.6 (14.35)	38.8 (7.82)	26.5 (8.18)
Not at all or not very useful	12.6 (7.61)	11.3 (8.74)	12.8 (5.62)	15.9 (5.32)	5.4 (5.95)	9.8 (10.74)	10.9 (5.00)	14.0 (6.43)
Young adults who received any help with schoolwork thought they were:								
Definitely getting enough	51.0 (10.96)	33.2 (12.74)	45.8 (8.08)	43.2 (7.04)	37.4 (12.37)	54.8 (16.89)	37.2 (7.55)	51.0 (8.92)
Probably getting enough	39.0 (10.69)	39.8 (13.24)	41.2 (7.98)	41.3 (6.99)	49.6 (12.78)	26.4 (14.95)	43.7 (7.75)	38.3 (8.67)
Probably or definitely not getting enough	10.0 (6.58)	27.0 (12.01)	13.0 (5.45)	15.5 (5.14)	13.1 (8.63)	18.7 (13.23)	19.2 (6.15)	10.6 (5.49)
Young adults who never received any help with school work thought assistance would have been helpful	50.9 (15.28)	55.9 (13.06)	36.7 (9.27)	40.2 (7.85)	36.0 (17.42)	83.9 (21.23)	39.3 (7.73)	49.8 (13.94)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 1,230 to 1,270 young adults.

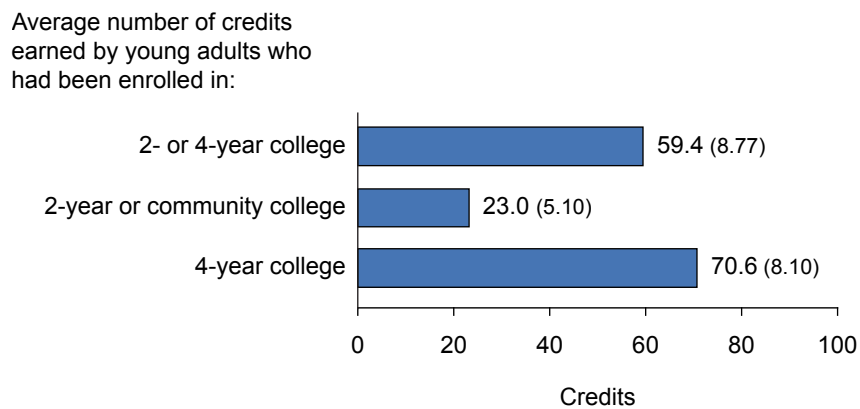
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2,3,4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Postsecondary Credits Earned

To complete college and obtain a degree, students must earn a certain number of credits overall—typically approximately 60 credits for an associate’s degree and 120 for a bachelor’s degree. Chen and Carol (2005) reported that individuals in the general population who had been out of high school for 8 years and had been enrolled in postsecondary education had earned an average of 91 credits and that parents’ education was positively associated with college credit accumulation. However, to date, little has been known about the credit accumulation of postsecondary school students with disabilities.

On average, young adults with disabilities who were out of high school up to 8 years and had attended a 2-year or 4-year college at some point in time had earned 59 semester credits (figure 15).⁵¹ Those who had attended 2-year or community colleges had earned on average 23 semester credits, and those who ever had attended a 4-year college had earned 71 semester credits.

Figure 15. Number of college credits earned by young adults with disabilities who ever had been enrolled in college



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 610 to 1,330 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), Waves 4 and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007 and 2009.

Disability Differences in Number of Credits Earned

The average numbers of credits earned in 2-year colleges ranged from approximately 20 credits for students with emotional disturbances to 43 credits for students with visual impairments (table 13). Students with hearing impairments and those with visual impairments earned significantly more postsecondary school credits (42 credits and 43 credits) than did students with emotional disturbances (20 credits; $p < .01$). At 4-year colleges, the average number

⁵¹ Respondents who had attended 2-year colleges were asked, “About how many total credits have you earned [did you earn] at the 2-year or community college or colleges you’ve attended? Are those semester credits or quarter credits?” and respondents who had attended 4-year colleges were asked, “About how many total credits have you earned [did you earn] at the 4-year college or colleges you’ve attended? Are those semester credits or quarter credits?” Quarter credits were multiplied by .67 to convert to semester credits for analysis and reporting. Respondents who attended vocational, business, or technical schools were not asked to report the number of earned credits.

of credits earned ranged from 61 for students with other health impairments to 94 for students with hearing impairments or visual impairments. No significant differences were found across disability categories for number of credits earned in 4-year colleges.

Table 13. Number of college credits earned by young adults with disabilities who had ever been enrolled in college, 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
Average number of credits												
Young adults who ever had been enrolled in:												
2-year or community college	29.8 (5.47)	34.4 (4.17)	‡	19.8 (5.24)	41.7 (6.94)	43.1 (6.77)	32.4 (5.22)	21.9 (4.35)	38.4 (8.34)	38.3 (10.78)	27.46 (8.43)	‡
4-year college	72.8 (11.89)	82.7 (9.00)	‡	‡	93.9 (10.28)	93.5 (11.60)	70.8 (8.91)	61.4 (12.30)	76.5 (11.24)	‡	‡	‡

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 610 and 1,010 young adults with disabilities attending 2- and 4-year colleges.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 4 and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007 and 2009.

Differences in Number of Credits Earned by High School-Leaving Characteristics

The average numbers of credits earned in 2- year and 4-year colleges did not differ significantly by secondary school-leaving characteristics (table 14).

Table 14. Number of college credits earned by young adults with disabilities who had ever been enrolled in college, by high school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 3 years	3 up to 5 years	5 up to 8 years
Average number of credits					
Young adults who ever had been enrolled in:					
2-year or community college	23.1 (5.14)	‡	18.9 (7.92)	29.3 (5.43)	30.0 (6.17)
4-year college	70.7 (8.78)	‡	46.1 (12.82)	59.2 (13.30)	84.2 (11.86)

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 610 to 1,010 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), Waves 4 and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007 and 2009.

Differences in Number of Credits Earned by Demographic Characteristics

Number of credits earned did not differ significantly by gender, race/ethnicity, or parents' household income (table 15).

Table 15. Number of college credits earned by young adults with disabilities who had ever been enrolled in college, by parents' household income and young adults' 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		
Average number of credits								
Young adults who ever had been enrolled in:								
2-year or community college	24.2 (9.17)	24.7 (6.22)	29.8 (4.93)	29.6 (4.74)	27.8 (10.25)	26.0 (8.22)	28.5 (4.69)	28.7 (6.94)
4-year college	75.2 (17.58)	51.5 (19.26)	73.0 (10.53)	75.4 (9.77)	62.7 (17.19)	89.8 (25.22)	67.1 (10.97)	80.6 (13.28)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 610 to 1,010 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), Waves 4 and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2007 and 2009.

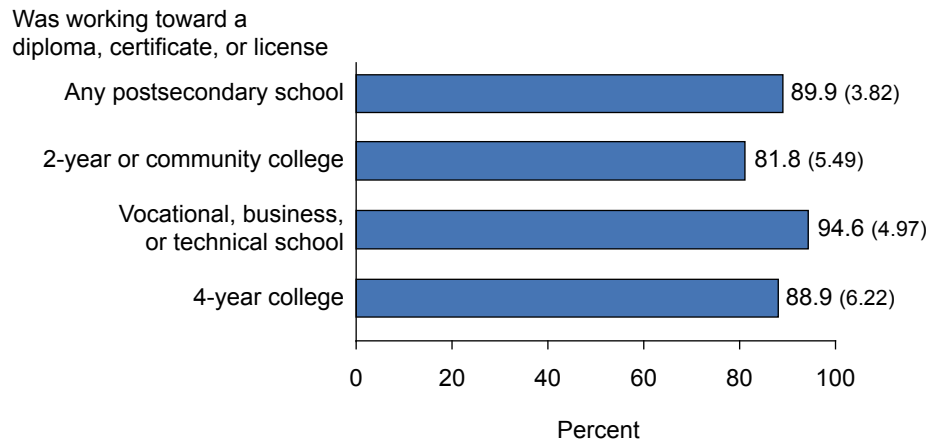
Postsecondary School Completion

For many students in the general population, postsecondary school enrollment does not result in degree attainment or program completion. Fewer than two-thirds of students in the general population who began as full-time freshmen in 4-year universities in 1995 received a bachelor's degree within a 6-year period (Berkner, He, and Cataldi 2002). Many individuals who begin postsecondary education but fail to graduate do not realize the economic importance of college graduation. For example, whereas the earnings gap between individuals with a bachelor's degree and those with a high school diploma has continuously widened over the past 30 years, those who enroll in college but do not graduate "have made only slight gains" (Carey 2004).

Ninety percent of young adults with disabilities who were currently enrolled in postsecondary school at the time of the interview asserted that they were "working toward a diploma, certificate, or license" (figure 16).⁵² The percentages so reporting did not differ significantly for students in different types of postsecondary institutions.

⁵² Respondents were asked, "Are you [is YOUTH] working toward a diploma, certificate, or license from this work?"

Figure 16. School completion goal of young adults with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary school at the time of the interview



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 280 to 960 young adults with disabilities.

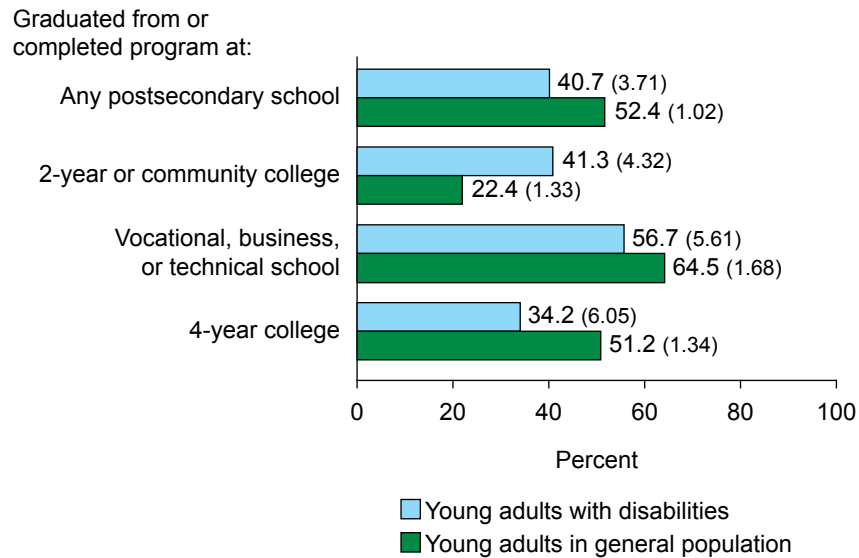
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Examining completion rates⁵³ across types of postsecondary schools (“any” postsecondary program), approximately 41 percent of students had graduated from their most recent postsecondary program (figure 17), 31 percent had left their most recent postsecondary school prior to completing (not in figure), and the remaining students still were currently enrolled in their postsecondary program at the time of the interview. Completion rates of postsecondary students with disabilities were lower than those of similar-aged postsecondary students in the general population (41 percent vs. 52 percent, $p < .001$).

Completion rates varied by type of postsecondary institution. Students with disabilities who attended postsecondary vocational, business, or technical schools were more likely to complete their programs than were those who enrolled in 4-year colleges (57 percent vs. 34 percent, $p < .01$). Compared with their peers in the general population, completion rates at 4-year colleges were lower for students with disabilities than for their peers (34 percent vs. 51 percent, $p < .001$). In contrast, their completion rates at 2-year or community college were higher than those of students in the general population (41 percent vs. 22 percent, $p < .001$).

⁵³ Completion rate in this report is calculated as a percentage of students who enrolled in postsecondary programs; it includes in its base students currently attending postsecondary school. This approach is used more widely than that previously used to calculate NLTS2 completion rates. Completion rates in previous NLTS2 reports were calculated as a percentage of students who had left postsecondary school. For wave 5 the completion rate would have been based on the 72 percent of students who had attended postsecondary school, but were not currently enrolled at the time of the Wave 5 interview. Based on the previous method of calculating completion rates, 47.6 percent of postsecondary students with disabilities and 55 percent of similar-aged peers in the general population had completed their postsecondary programs (not a significant difference).

Figure 17. Completion rates of students with disabilities from current or most recently attended postsecondary school



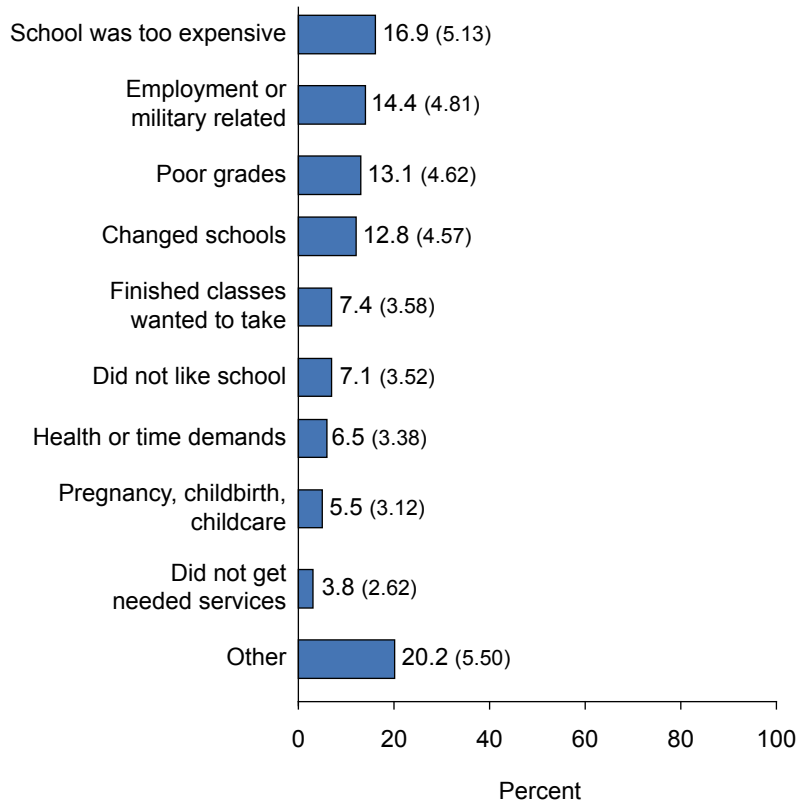
NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples that range from approximately 670 to 2,170 young adults with disabilities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) 2005 youth survey, responses for 21- to 25-year-olds.

Reasons for leaving postsecondary school varied for the 31 percent of postsecondary school leavers who did not graduate or complete their programs.⁵⁴ The most common reason for leaving school concerned its cost: 17 percent of young adults with disabilities reportedly left for this reason (figure 18). Employment or the military, poor grades, and changing schools were the next most common reasons for leaving, with 14 percent, 13 percent, and 13 percent of young adults with disabilities, respectively, leaving for these reasons. Seven percent of young adults with disabilities cited finishing the classes they wanted as their reason for leaving, with similar percentages of young adults with disabilities asserting not liking school or having health or time demands as reasons. Six percent cited pregnancy, childbirth, or childcare; and 4 percent reported not getting the services they needed as reasons. Twenty percent indicated they had left for other reasons, with no single reason within the “other” category accounting for more than 3 percent of exits.

⁵⁴ Respondents who had been in a postsecondary program earlier but were not currently enrolled and had not graduated were asked, “Why did you [YOUTH] stop going to college?”

Figure 18. Reasons why young adults with disabilities who had not completed postsecondary school and no longer were enrolled had left postsecondary school



NOTE: Figure includes young adults with disabilities who left any given type of postsecondary school even if they were enrolled in another type of postsecondary school at the time of the interview. If a young adult with a disability left postsecondary schools more than once, the last reason for leaving is shown. Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on a sample of approximately 290 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), Waves 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Disability Differences in Postsecondary School Completion

The majority of young adults 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 73 percent of students with multiple disabilities to 97 percent of students with orthopedic or other health impairments ($p < .01$ for both comparisons with multiple disabilities; table 16).

Within 8 years of leaving high school, completion rates from most recent postsecondary schools ranged from 28 percent for young adults with deaf/blindness to 53 percent of those with hearing impairments (no significant differences).

Table 16. Completion rates of students from current or most recently attended 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											
Young adults enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	89.1 (5.41)	91.6 (4.26)	‡	96.1 (4.84)	91.8 (4.88)	95.7 (4.63)	96.8 (3.33)	96.6 (3.64)	79.5 (8.56)	90.4 (8.66)	72.5 (11.24)	‡
Completion rate of students in current or most recently attended postsecondary school	40.9 (5.23)	43.8 (4.78)	44.2 (8.44)	35.1 (6.05)	52.9 (6.16)	42.8 (6.86)	34.7 (5.39)	40.4 (5.35)	38.8 (7.02)	49.9 (9.97)	42.1 (8.38)	27.7 (9.14)

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 960 young adults with disabilities for working toward a degree or diploma and 2,170 young adults with disabilities for graduation rate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Differences in Postsecondary School Completion by High School-Leaving Characteristics

Among young adults with disabilities who attended postsecondary school, there were no significant differences in the percentages who expected to complete postsecondary school or actual rates of postsecondary school completion by high school-leaving characteristics or time since leaving secondary school (table 17).

Table 17. Completion rates of students with disabilities from current or most recently attended postsecondary school, by high school-leaving status and years since leaving high school

	Completers	Non-completers	Less than 3 years	3 up to 5 years	5 years or more
	Percent				
Young adults enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	90.0 (3.87)	‡	95.9 (6.03)	85.2 (7.31)	91.7 (5.19)
Completion rate of students in current or most recently attended postsecondary school	42.2 (4.00)	‡	35.7 (9.79)	32.6 (6.02)	47.5 (5.16)

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

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 960 young adults with disabilities for working toward a degree or diploma and 2,170 young adults with disabilities for graduation rate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Demographic Differences in Postsecondary School Completion

Among young adults with disabilities who attended postsecondary school, there were no significant differences by demographic characteristics in the percentages who expected to complete postsecondary school or actual rates of postsecondary school completion (table 18).

Table 18. Completion rates of students with disabilities from current or most recently attended postsecondary school, by parents' household income and young adults' 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								
Young adults enrolled at the time of the interview who were working toward a diploma, certificate, or license	87.5 (8.84)	91.8 (7.90)	89.8 (4.91)	94.3 (3.50)	77.1 (11.53)	98.2 (5.29)	89.0 (5.21)	91.2 (5.53)
Completion rate of students in current or most recently attended postsecondary school	39.5 (7.67)	31.9 (7.14)	45.3 (5.15)	44.4 (4.50)	33.0 (8.19)	37.1 (11.11)	39.0 (4.67)	43.8 (6.10)

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Findings are reported for young adults with disabilities out of high school up to 8 years. NLTS2 percentages are weighted population estimates based on samples of approximately 960 young adults with disabilities for working toward a degree or diploma and 2,170 young adults with disabilities for graduation rate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Waves 2, 3, 4, and 5 parent interview and youth interview/survey, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

This chapter has presented a national picture of the postsecondary experiences and outcomes of young adults with disabilities. Chapter 3 examines employment experiences and outcomes, and chapter 4 focuses on the overlap between postsecondary education and employment.