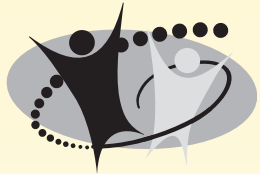


NLTS2 Data Brief

A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 • March 2004, Vol. 3, Issue 1



National Center on Secondary
Education and Transition
Creating Opportunities for Youth With
Disabilities to Achieve Successful Futures



NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL
TRANSITION STUDY 2



NLTS2 is being
conducted by SRI International

Social Activities of Youth with Disabilities

By Mary Wagner, Tom W. Cadwallader, Nicolle Garza, and Renée Cameto

When youth take part in informal activities with friends or participate in organized extracurricular activities, their choices about how they use their nonschool hours can result in opportunities to explore interests, learn skills, develop friendships, have fun, and participate actively as members of their schools and communities. Activities with peers can take on particular importance during adolescence, when teens become more independent from their families and use peers for some types of support that previously were provided by family members.

Although extracurricular activities and relationships may be crucial to the healthy development of all youth, some kinds of disabilities can present challenges to participation. The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)¹, sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U. S. Department of Education, provides a national perspective on the participation of youth with disabilities in activities involving individual friendships and organized groups. NLTS2 findings generalize to all students receiving special education who were between the ages of 13 and 16 in December 2000.

Friendships and Extracurricular Activities

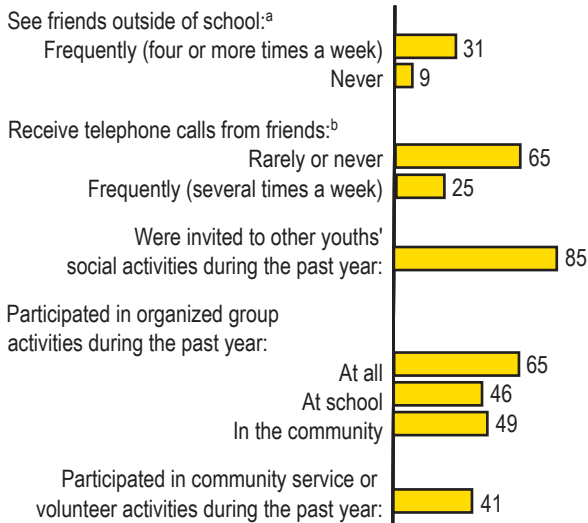
To understand the friendships of youth with disabilities, parents were asked how often youth interact with friends by getting together outside of school, receiving telephone calls from them, and being invited to other youths' social activities. They were also asked whether youth had taken part in various extracurricular activities during the previous year.

Many youth with disabilities often get together with friends in person and by telephone. Almost one-third see friends outside of class four or more times a week (Exhibit 1), and about twice as many receive telephone calls from friends several times a week. A large majority (85%) get invitations to friends' social activities. However, a minority of youth are markedly less involved with friends. Almost one in 10 are reported never to see friends, one-fourth rarely or never receive telephone

¹ NLTS2 has a nationally representative sample of more than 11,000 youth who on December 1, 2000, were ages 13 through 16, receiving special education, and in at least 7th grade. Information from NLTS2 is weighted to represent youth with disabilities nationally as a group, as well as youth in each federal special education disability category. The information reported here was gathered from parents/guardians of NLTS2 youth in telephone interviews or through mail questionnaires in 2001.

Exhibit 1: Friendships and Extracurricular Activities of Youth with Disabilities

Percentage of youth who:



^a The category "occasionally (fewer than four times a week)" is omitted from the table.

^b The category "occasionally (one or more times a month, but not weekly)" is omitted from the table.

calls from them, and 15% had not received a social invitation from a friend during the past year.

In addition to informal interactions with friends outside of class, almost two-thirds of youth are involved in organized group activities, with involvement in school- and community-sponsored activities being about equal. The rate of participation of youth with disabilities in organized group activities (65%) exceeds that of youth in the general population (61%), according to data calculated from the National Survey of American Families (NSAF, 1999). Rates of group participation by youth with disabilities have not changed markedly since 1987.²

About half of those who belong to groups belong to sports teams, and a similar proportion is reported to belong to religious groups. Performing groups, such as a band or dramatic group, and special interest groups, such as a hobby club or school club, are outlets for 18% and 11% of group members, respectively. Few are reported to belong to a disability-ori-

ented group (5%) or a youth development group, such as a Boys or Girls Club (3%).

Community service or volunteer activities were reported for 41% of secondary-school-age youth with disabilities. Youth with disabilities are substantially less likely to take part in these activities than youth in the general population (73%) (NSAF, 1999).

Disability Differences in Friendships and Extracurricular Activities

Youth with various disabilities have very different levels of involvement with friends and extracurricular groups (Exhibit 2). For example, the percentage of youth who see friends frequently ranges from 6% to 34%. Receiving telephone calls frequently varies from 10% to 71% of youth with different kinds of disabilities. Group membership is more consistent across disability categories, ranging from 56% to 75% of youth.

Youth with learning disabilities or speech impairments are among the most active. Youth with emotional disturbances have active individual friendships but are less likely than others to belong to organized groups. In contrast, youth with hearing impairments are active group members and among the most likely to do volunteer activities or community service, but they tend to see friends or receive telephone calls from them less frequently than many other groups.

Youth with autism, multiple disabilities, or deaf-blindness are among the least likely to be actively involved with individual friends. From 27% to 40% of youth in these categories are reported never to see friends outside of class, and about half or more are not invited to social activities. Yet, more than half take part in organized group activities, and about one-third or more do community service.

Demographic Differences in Friendships and Extracurricular Activities

There are no age-related differences in friendships and extracurricular activities among youth with disabilities in the NLTS2 age range. Differences between boys and girls are apparent in that boys are more likely to see friends frequently (34% vs. 23%), but also are more likely to have infrequent telephone calls from

² Wagner, M., Cameto, R., & Newman, L. (2003). *Youth with disabilities: A changing population*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Available at <http://www.nlts2.org/YouthDisabilities.pdf>.

Exhibit 2: Friendships and Extracurricular Activities, by Disability Category

Percentage of youth who:	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
See friends outside of school: ^a												
Frequently	33	27	22	34	22	18	14	28	6	24	14	12
Never	7	9	16	11	8	15	20	6	44	8	30	27
Receive telephone calls from friends: ^b												
Frequently	71	66	47	64	49	57	43	66	10	51	27	29
Rarely/never	19	22	42	26	41	33	47	23	84	34	63	64
Were invited to other youths' social activities during the past year:												
	89	89	75	83	88	78	70	88	49	80	56	65
Participated in organized group activities during the past year:												
At all	68	72	56	57	75	64	63	71	56	62	58	60
At school	49	60	33	35	60	51	41	52	30	42	37	45
In the community	51	55	41	42	55	44	48	55	44	50	44	45
Participated in community service or volunteer activities during the past year:												
	43	46	33	37	44	43	40	47	35	41	32	34

^a The category "occasionally" (fewer than four times a week) is omitted from the table.

^b The category "occasionally" (one or more times a month but not every week) is omitted from the table.

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews

friends (27% vs. 21%). Boys and girls are about equally likely to take part in extracurricular activities, but among those who belong to organized groups, boys favor sports teams (57% vs. 36% of girls), whereas girls are more likely to belong to religious groups (57% vs. 45%) or performing groups (27% vs. 13%).

Friendship interactions and extracurricular activities vary for youth from households with different income levels and racial/ethnic backgrounds (Exhibit 3, see back page). Most friendship interactions and extracurricular activities are more common among youth with disabilities from higher-income families.

Hispanic youth generally are the least likely to have active friendships and to participate in organized group activities. They and African American youth are also less likely than white youth with disabilities to take part in volunteer or community service activities.

Upcoming analyses from NLTS2 will explore changes in patterns of friendships and extracurricular activities as youth age and the effects friendship patterns and extracurricular activities have on academic and other social outcomes for youth with disabilities.

For More Information

For more information on the subject of this *NLTS2 Data Brief*, see Wagner, M., Cadwallader, T. W., & Marder, C. (with Cameto, R., Cardoso, D., Garza, N., Levine, P., & Newman, L.). (2003). *Life outside the classroom for youth with disabilities*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, available on the Web site: www.nlts2.org.

NLTS2 Welcomes Feedback!

Contact us—
 NLTS2, 333 Ravenswood Avenue., BS-136
 Menlo Park, CA 94025
 Phone: 866.269.7274; E-mail: nlts2@sri.com
 Web: www.nlts2.org

The authors are part of the NLTS2 research team at the Center for Education and Human Services, SRI International.

**Exhibit 3: Friendships and Extracurricular Activities,
by Household Income and Race/Ethnicity**

Percentage of youth who:	Household Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 or less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African American	Hispanic
See friends: ^a						
Never	14	8	5	7	8	22
Frequently	26	35	32	34	30	21
Receive telephone calls from friends: ^b						
Rarely or never	28	23	24	23	24	32
Frequently	61	67	67	67	66	56
Were invited to other youths' social activities during the past year:						
	80	88	89	87	83	80
Participated in organized group activities during the past year:						
	57	66	73	69	65	50
Participated in community service or volunteer activities during the past year:						
	32	40	52	47	30	28

^a The category "occasionally" (fewer than four times a week) is omitted from the table.

^b The category "occasionally" (one or more times a month but not every week) is omitted from the table.

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews

**National Center on Secondary
Education and Transition**

Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD),
University of Minnesota, 6 Pattee Hall,
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455

Tel: 612.624.2097; Fax: 612.624.9344;

Web: <http://www.ncset.org>;

E-mail: ncset@umn.edu

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, (Cooperative Agreement No. H326J000005). Although the U.S. Department of Education has reviewed this document, the contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of other organizations imply endorsement by those organizations or the U.S. Government.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This publication is available on the Web at <http://www.ncset.org>, and is available in alternate formats upon request. To request an alternate format or additional copies, contact NCSET at 612.624.2097.



U.S. Office of Special
Education Programs



The College of Education
& Human Development

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mpls., MN
Permit No. 155

National Center on Secondary
Education and Transition
Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD)
University of Minnesota
6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive, SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

