

Disability gap in post-16 destinations and employment outcomes revealed by new analysis

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Important differences in the post-16 pathways of disabled young people compared to those of their non-disabled peers have been revealed in a new working paper from University of Warwick researchers.

Adolescent Disability, Post-16 Destinations and Early Socioeconomic Attainment: Initial Evidence from Next Steps presents a comprehensive analysis of longitudinal data from about 16,000 [young people](#) in English schools, born in 1989/1990.

Dr. Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr. Sanne Velthuis compare disabled and non-disabled students to highlight pronounced inequalities. The working paper also documents the impact of different types of [disabilities](#), and shows that disability inequalities in post-16 destinations and [economic activity](#) in early adulthood are also influenced by social class, ethnicity, and gender.

Among the disability gaps revealed by the data are:

- Post-16 education: 70% of disabled young people remain in education a few months after the end of Year 11, as opposed to 80% of non-disabled peers.
- Type of education provider: Disabled young people are more likely to go to general Further Education colleges than their non-disabled peers (39% as opposed to 24%). They are much less likely to stay in school or go to sixth forms (39% as opposed to 63%).
- Employment: At age 25, 82% of non-disabled young people are in employment as opposed to only 64% of disabled young people. A far higher percentage of disabled young people are unemployed or economically inactive at this stage.
- Occupation: Disabled young people are much more likely to find themselves in semi-routine and routine jobs with low occupational status than non-disabled young people
- Types of disability: Young people with SEN statements have particularly low rates of participation in employment and are also more likely to experience unemployment compared to disabled young people without statements of need.

- Variation by social class: at age 25 parental class has a strong influence on the employment gap—young people with parents in higher social class groups were only 8% less likely to be in employment than non-disabled peers of the same social class, whereas young people with parents in lower social class groups were 23% less likely to be in work compared to non-disabled peers from the same [social class](#).

Overall, young people with disabilities are more likely to experience unemployment and less likely to continue in post-compulsory education than non-disabled peers. When they do continue in education they are more likely to be enrolled at a Further Education college and are more likely to drop out mid-year and become unemployed than young people without disabilities. By age 25 the disability gap has become even more pronounced, with disabled young people more likely to be economically inactive or employed in lower-status, routine work.

Dr. Chatzitheochari said: "These findings illustrate how disabled young people, through being routed into different education and training pathways, as well as through facing employment-related barriers, often end up in positions of socio-economic disadvantage in early adulthood.

"Our results additionally showed that disabled young people from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background are disproportionately affected, with substantially worse educational and occupational outcomes.

"Further research is needed to better understand these findings. For example, we need to establish the extent to which inequalities in employment levels are due to differences in [educational attainment](#), discrimination in hiring practices or lack of reasonable adjustments and support in the workplace. This is important to alleviate enduring inequalities documented in our working paper.

"Likewise, better data are necessary to document inequalities by different types of SEN/condition. This will allow us to understand whether different disabilities/learning difficulties are subject to the same barriers, which is key for developing better policies to enable disabled young people to succeed in post-16 [education](#) and move into good jobs."

More information: Sanne Velthuis et al. Adolescent Disability, Post-16 Destinations, and Early Socioeconomic Attainment: Initial Evidence from Next Steps, *SocArxiv* (2021). [DOI: 10.31235/osf.io/vwcmt](#)

Provided by University of Warwick

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