Postsecondary education is a key factor in achieving economic success. However, little attention has been paid to the role that disability plays in determining whether youth enroll in postsecondary education. A new study released today finds that youth with a neurodevelopmental condition (NDC) or a mental health condition (MHC) were substantially less likely to enroll in postsecondary education than youth who were not diagnosed with any long-term health condition in their school years.

The study draws on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and the T1 Family File (T1FF). The sample is composed of 7- to 15-year-olds in 2000/2001 whose parents were asked to report whether their children had been diagnosed with a long-term NDC (primarily learning disabilities, but also epilepsy, cerebral palsy and intellectual disability) or an MHC (primarily attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], but also emotional, psychological or nervous difficulties). These children were then followed until they were 21 or 22 years of age, through the T1FF, which contains various tax credits used to identify postsecondary enrollment.

Overall, 10% of youth were diagnosed with an NDC and/or an MHC. Of this group, 64% were male. Meanwhile, 60% of youth with an NDC and just under half of those with an MHC enrolled in postsecondary education, while 36% of youth diagnosed with both an NDC and an MHC did so. By comparison, more than three-quarters of youth who had not been diagnosed with an NDC or an MHC enrolled in postsecondary education.

These enrollment patterns largely remained after accounting for differences in other important determinants of postsecondary enrollment, such as sex, academic performance and family background.

The study found that parental aspirations for their child's educational attainment tended to be much lower for youth with an NDC. When this factor was taken into account, there was no remaining difference in postsecondary enrollment between these youth and the comparison group.

In contrast, the gap in postsecondary enrollment between youth with an MHC and the comparison group was still substantial after differences in parental aspirations and other factors were taken into account.

Youth may show some symptoms of ADHD without being diagnosed. Further analysis showed that even moderate amounts of hyperactivity-inattention were linked to a significantly lower likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education.

The proportion of youth enrolled in postsecondary education was 8 percentage points lower among those with moderate degrees of parent-reported hyperactivity-inattention compared with youth with little or no parent-reported hyperactivity-inattention. This difference remained when other factors of postsecondary enrollment were taken into account.
**Sustainable Development Goals**

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*—the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

The study "Are Mental Health and Neurodevelopmental Conditions Barriers to Postsecondary Access?" is an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. This release will be used in helping to measure the following goal:

The research paper "Are Mental Health and Neurodevelopmental Conditions Barriers to Postsecondary Access?" which is part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series (11F0019M)*, is now available.

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

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