



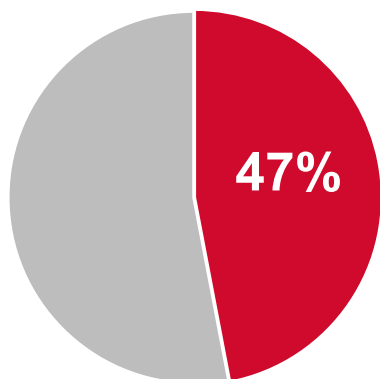
## Key Findings from the National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood

This fact sheet summarizes key findings from the National Autism Indicators Report which can be found here: [drex.lu/autismindicators](http://drex.lu/autismindicators). The Autism Indicators report tracks statistics about issues facing individuals on the autism spectrum. These statistics set the stage to discover whether quality of life for those with autism and their families is improving over time.

The Life Course Outcomes Research Program is building a base of knowledge about the things other than clinical interventions that promote positive outcomes for people on the autism spectrum and their families and communities.



**Being bullied is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness.**



of youth with autism were victims of bullying during high school.

## Safety and Risk Among Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum



In general, there is little published research on the topics of safety and risk for youth and young adults with autism. Safety and risk concerns occur in many settings. In this chapter, we provide baseline statistics on a range of topics including bullying, wandering behavior, individual risk behaviors and criminal justice involvement.

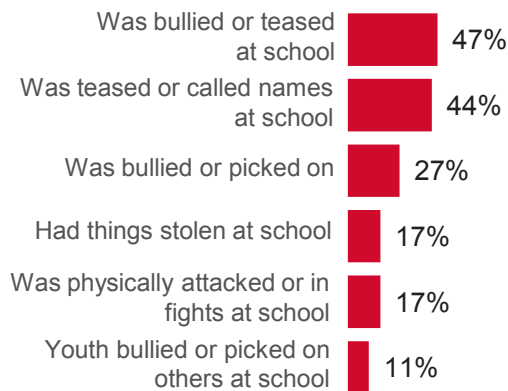
In this report, we examine safety and risk behaviors such as bullying involvement during the high school years, risk behaviors in adulthood, and criminal justice involvement. We used data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) collected in 2009 when young adults were 21 to 25 years old. Safety and risk behaviors statistics came from reports by a smaller group of young adults who were capable of responding to the NLTS2 questions.

### Youth experienced high rates of teasing and bullying.

Our prior work found that nearly half of adolescents with autism were victims of bullying and almost 15% were perpetrators of bullying.<sup>1</sup> This victimization rate is higher than the 28% of youth in the general population who report being bullied.<sup>2</sup>

NLTS2 data indicates that nearly 47% of youth with autism were victims of bullying during high school. We defined bullying as including both physical bullying and verbal teasing. One in four reported being bullied or picked on by other students either at school or on the way to/from school. Fewer said they were physically attacked or in fights at school or on the way to/from school. Over one in 10 students reported that they engaged in bullying or teasing other students.

### Nearly half of youth with autism experienced threats and bullying.



Percent experienced threat

Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

## Low rates of involvement with criminal justice

Rates of criminal justice involvement were very low. Similar to youth, very few young adults experienced being arrested within the past two years (<1%) or since leaving high school (<2%). The number of young adults who stayed overnight in jail in the last two years was too low to report, and only .5% had been on probation or parole. However, nearly 4% reported being stopped and questioned by police within the past two years.

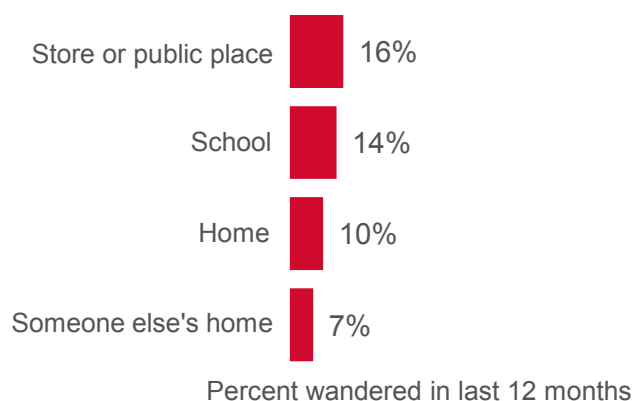
## Nearly 80% of autistic young adults engaged in no risk behaviors (62%) or one (17%) risk behavior.

### High rates of wandering in adolescence

Wandering, or impulsively leaving a supervised situation and sometimes becoming lost, is another serious topic we know little about. A recent study found that 27% of 8- to 11-year-old youth with autism wandered – a behavior which continued at lower rates into the teenage years and was more frequent in young adults with lower levels of intellectual and communication abilities.<sup>3</sup>

Youth with autism most often wandered off or became lost in public places like stores, restaurants, playgrounds, and campsites. Some also wandered away from home and others from school, day care, or summer camp. Fewer wandered off or became lost from someone else's home such as a relative, friend, neighbor, or babysitter. Over 27% of adolescents engaged in at least one of these types of wandering within the previous year.

### 15- to 17-year-old youth with autism wandered more often from public places and school.



Source: Survey of Pathways to Services and Diagnosis

### Perceived safety and risk behaviors in young adulthood

We explored factors that are related to safety and risk based on responses from young adults who were capable of responding to the NLT52 questions. About 38% of responses came directly from young adults.

#### Neighborhood Safety

A strong majority (93%) of autistic young adults reported feeling safe in their own neighborhood.

#### Alcohol & Smoking

About one-third (31%) reported having at least one drink of alcohol in the past month, and 15% reported smoking cigarettes in the past month.

#### Sexual Behaviors

Approximately one-quarter (22%) of young adults reported they had ever had sexual intercourse. Of these, 37% reported using a condom and 54% reported use of birth control.

#### Illegal Drug Use

Approximately 8% of young adults said they had used marijuana, cocaine, or other illegal drugs in the past 30 days (which were illegal at the time of the survey).

#### How to cite the source of this information:

Roux, Anne M., Shattuck, Paul T., Rast, Jessica E., Rava, Julianna A., and Anderson, Kristy, A. *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood*. Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Research Program, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2015.

#### Sources:

1. Sterzing PR, Shattuck PT, Narendorf SC, Wagner MW, and Cooper BP. (2012). Bullying involvement and autism spectrum disorders: Prevalence and correlates of bullying involvement among adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 166(11):1058-1064.
2. Robers S, Kemp J, and Truman J. (2013). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2012 (NCES 2013-036/ NCJ 241446). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.
3. Anderson C, Law JK, Daniels A, Rice C, Mandell DS, Hagopian L, and Law PA. (2012). Occurrence and family impact of elopement in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Pediatrics* 130: 870-877.

