

## Citation

Jastrzab, J., Masker, J., Blomquist, J., & Orr, L. (1996). *Impacts of service: Final report on the evaluation of American Conservation and Youth Service Corps*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc.

## Highlights

- The study's objective was to estimate the impacts of eight Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs that sought to improve educational and employment outcomes for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 25 and to improve their personal development.
- The full evaluation consisted of an estimation of participant impacts and cost-benefit analysis for four of eight study sites and estimation of community impacts for all eight sites. Data sources for the participant-level impact analysis included a self-administered baseline survey and enrollment form and a follow-up telephone survey conducted 15 months after random assignment.
- The study found statistically significant, positive impacts for program participants on the likelihood of having worked for pay since program enrollment and working a larger number of total hours since program enrollment (including time spent in the corps).
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is moderate. This means we have some confidence that the estimated effects are attributable to the Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs, but other factors might also have contributed.

## Features of the Conservation and Youth Service Corps Program

Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs, funded under Subtitle C of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, established and expanded full-time and summer programs for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 25. The programs were designed to be labor-intensive; instill public service and a good work ethic in participants; involve youth working in teams; and increase skill development, educational attainment, and employment opportunities for participants. The programs revolved around conducting community service activities for the betterment of the community as a whole. Over the 14-month period examined in this report, participants engaged in an average of 435 hours of service, primarily for community-based or not-for-profit organizations. Specific activities included tutoring students, organizing community events, rehabilitating housing for low-income residents, and storm clean-up.

## Features of the Study

This study examined 8 of the 100 year-round Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs that received funding in the 1993–1994 program year. The impact evaluation component of the study focused on 4 study sites that had large, mature programs. In these sites, the study randomly assigned applicants to either a treatment group that received the program or a control group that was prohibited from enrolling in the program for one year.

The impact evaluation drew on data from a self-administered baseline survey and enrollment form and a follow-up telephone survey conducted 15 months after random assignment with both treatment and control group members. The analysis sample for the study included 626 participants, of which 383 were in the treatment group and 243 in the control group.

## Study Sites

Four sites participated in the impact analysis:

- Greater Miami Service Corps, Florida
- City Volunteer Corps, New York City
- Santa Clara District, California Conservation Corps
- Washington State Service Corps

## Findings

- The study reported a greater likelihood for program participants to have worked for pay since program enrollment compared with the control group (89 versus 73 percent); this difference was statistically significant.
- The study also reported that program group participants worked 40 percent more hours than control group members (2,030 versus 1,464 hours); this difference was statistically significant. The study noted that these positive impacts were largely attributable to work done while in the corps.
- The study did not find statistically significant positive impacts on average monthly earnings or being employed at the time of the follow-up survey.
- Subgroup analyses by race and gender found generally positive impacts on employment outcomes for African Americans and Hispanics, with especially positive results for African American males.

## Considerations for Interpreting the Findings

Although this research is based on a randomized controlled trial, the number of youth who were initially randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups was not provided in the report. Attempts to retrieve this information from study authors were unsuccessful due to the age of the study. In the absence of this information, the research cannot receive a high causal evidence rating. However, the authors included an exhaustive set of baseline variables in the analyses, giving us confidence that the estimated impacts are attributable at least in part to the Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs.

## Causal Evidence Rating

The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is moderate because, although it is a randomized controlled trial with unknown attrition, the study authors included adequate control variables in their analysis. This means we are somewhat confident that the estimated effects are attributable to the Conservation and Youth Service Corps programs, although other factors might also have contributed.