

Citation

Schochet, P., Burghardt, J., & Glazerman, S. (2001). National Job Corps Study: The impacts of Job Corps on participants' employment and related outcomes. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

Highlights

- The National Job Corps Study included several reports, including this final impact report. The report's objective was to examine the impact of the Job Corps program on participants' long-term earnings, employment, and other outcomes. It also described the participants' Job Corps experiences.
- Job Corps offers intensive academic classroom instruction and vocational skills training to economically disadvantaged youth. Its effectiveness was evaluated using a randomized controlled trial conducted in 48 states and the District of Columbia.
- This report found statistically significant, positive impacts of Job Corps on participants' employment, earnings, and education and training outcomes measured after four years.
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this report is high because it is based on a well-conducted randomized controlled trial. This means we are confident that the Job Corps program—not other factors—caused the estimated impacts.

Features of Job Corps

Job Corps is a federally funded program that has been in operation since 1964. It offers individualized academic education, vocational training, counseling, and job placement assistance to economically disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24. Services are delivered at Job Corps centers, where most Job Corps students reside while participating in the program. Most participants do not have a general equivalency degree (GED) or high school diploma upon program entry and they participate in the program for an average of eight months.

Features of the Study

The study was a randomized controlled trial conducted at 119 Job Corps centers in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Eligible youth were randomly selected to either receive an offer to participate in Job Corps immediately or to not be able to participate in Job Corps until three years later (the control group). The study team administered a follow-up survey to both groups approximately 48 months after random assignment to collect data on the outcomes of interest. The sample included about 11,000 youth in total.

To estimate the effectiveness of Job Corps, the authors compared the outcomes of those youth randomly selected to receive an offer to participate in Job Corps with the outcomes of those not permitted to participate in Job Corps until three years later. This report includes impacts related to education, employment, and training, as measured with data collected through the follow-up survey. It also includes impacts related to receipt of public assistance, involvement with the criminal justice system, crimes committed against Job Corps participants, use of legal and illegal substances, health and mortality, family formation and child care, and mobility (not described in this profile).

Findings

- Youth who were offered Job Corps had significantly higher earnings and worked more hours and weeks than the control group; in the 48th month after random assignment, youth who were offered Job Corps earned \$18 more per week and were employed 1.5 hours more per week than youth who were not offered Job Corps.
- Job Corps significantly increased education and training rates; youth who were offered Job Corps spent 3.5 hours more per week on education and training than the control group and were 23 percentage points more likely to receive a vocational, technical, or trade certificate.
- Males and females experienced similar impacts on employment and earnings.

Considerations for Interpreting the Findings

The study was a well-conducted randomized controlled. However, not all youth who received an offer to participate in the Job Corps program actually participated in it. This could temper the results, which were based on the *offer* to enroll, and not actually enrolling. Overall, 73 percent of those eligible to enroll in the Job Corps program actually did enroll. In addition, 1.4 percent of control group members enrolled in Job Corps.

The study authors estimated multiple related impacts on employment and earnings. Performing multiple statistical tests on related outcomes makes it more likely that some impacts will be found statistically significant purely by chance and not because they reflect program effectiveness. The authors did not perform statistical adjustments to account for the multiple tests, so the number of statistically significant findings from the study is likely to be overstated.

Causal Evidence Rating

The quality of causal evidence presented in this report is high because it is based on a well-conducted randomized controlled trial. This means we are confident that the effects estimated in the study are solely attributable to the Job Corps intervention, and not to other factors.