

### Citation

Schochet, P., McConnell, S., & Burghardt, J. (2003). National Job Corps Study: Findings using administrative earnings records data. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

### Highlights

- The National Job Corps Study included several reports, including a final impact report. Schochet et al. (2003) is a follow-up to the final impact report. This report's objective was to estimate the impact of Job Corps on long-term earnings and employment, as measured by administrative earnings records.
- 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' earnings within the first three years and employment within the first four years of follow-up, but no impacts of Job Corps on these outcomes in the fifth and sixth years.
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this report is high. 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). This report used Social Security Earnings Records (SSERs) for approximately 15,000 Job Corps applicants to examine the impact of Job Corps on long-term employment outcomes. The study also examined unemployment insurance wage records to conduct a similar analysis, but these data did not cover as many participants as the SSER data.

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.

## Findings

- Job Corps participants were significantly more likely to be employed in the first four calendar years after random assignment than youth in the control group. The differences in employment rates between the two groups decreased over time, with a difference of 10 percentage points in the first calendar year and 1 percentage point in the fourth calendar year.
- On average, Job Corps participants earned \$177 less in the first calendar year after random assignment than youth in the control group, reflecting their engagement in training at that time. However, they earned \$172 more in the second year and \$220 more in the third year than control group youth; these differences were statistically significant.
- There were no statistically significant differences in employment rates between the treatment and control groups five or six years after random assignment. There were no discernible impacts on earnings four to six years after random assignment.
- Analyses of these outcomes for males found positive and statistically significant impacts in the first three years and no impacts in the later years. For females, the authors found no statistically significant impacts on earnings in any year, but they reported a statistically significant positive impact on employment for females in years one, two, and four.

## 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.

The study's 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.