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Final Report

Evaluation of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe / Job ChalleNGe Program

May 22, 2020

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Submitted to:

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Washington, DC 20210
Project Officer: Jennifer Daley
Contract Number: DOLQ129633249/
DOL-OPS-15-U-00089

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Contents

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Exhibits

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many youth in America are not on track for labor market success. One factor that increases the risk of poor labor market outcomes among these youth is dropping out of school (Rumberger 2020). Youth who drop out of school are at greater risk for job instability and for lower long-term earnings (Hair et al. 2009). They are also more likely to struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues (Maynard et al. 2015). These challenges are compounded for youth who have early involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems. Even low levels of involvement can disrupt school attendance and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school (Kirk and Sampson 2013; Hjalmarsson 2008). Additional collateral consequences—including restrictions on financial aid, employer discrimination, and occupational licensing restrictions—also create barriers to future labor market success (Simpson and Holthe 2018). Youth with prior involvement in the justice system need targeted support to overcome these barriers (Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention 2000).

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe (YC) Program is an evidence-based program for helping youth who have dropped out of high school get back on track. An evaluation of this program for youth ages 16 to 18 found that three years after program entry, YC participants were more likely than the control group to have obtained a GED or high school diploma, earned college credits, and be employed (Millenky et al. 2011). The YC model includes a 20-week, community-based residential program followed by a year of post-program mentoring that aims to build youth confidence and maturity, teach practical life skills, and help youth obtain a high school diploma or GED. Building on this successful model, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded YC programs in three states, to expand their YC programs to include more court-involved youth and to create a follow-on residential occupational training program called Job ChalleNGe (JC).

DOL's Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), in partnership with ETA, contracted with Mathematica and its subcontractors, Social Policy Research Associates and MDRC, to evaluate the JC grants. The evaluation examined the implementation of these grants and the outcomes for youth participants related to postsecondary education, employment, and criminal justice involvement in the two years following program involvement. This report describes our findings and presents lessons from the experiences of the three grantees and participating youth.

Overview of the Job ChalleNGe grants and the evaluation

In 2015, DOL issued a total of $12 million in JC grants to existing YC programs in Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina. YC is authorized by the National Guard and is funded through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Defense and each state's National Guard. The JC grants included 3 months of planning and 36 months of service delivery during which grantees were expected to serve six cohorts of youth in the JC program. DOL had two explicit goals for the JC grants: (1) to expand the target population of YC to include more youth

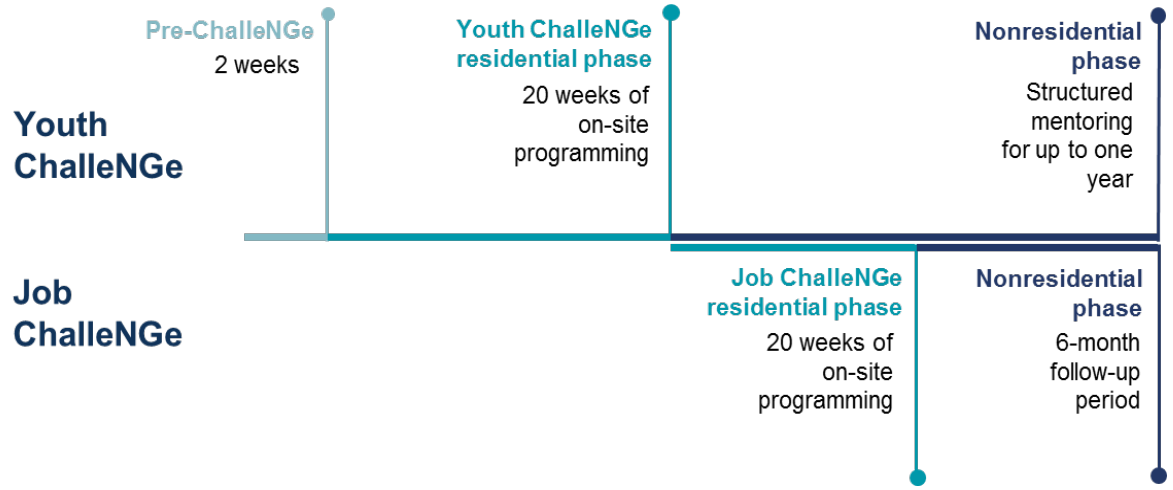
who have been involved with the courts and (2) to add a residential occupational training component, known as JC, that would be available as an option for YC graduates (DOL 2015).

- **Serving court-involved youth.** The goal to expand services to more court-involved youth aimed to make a difference in the lives of youth who face additional barriers to education and employment because of their court involvement. Although DOL did not set an explicit target for the increase in the number of court-involved youth to be served by YC, each grantee had a target enrollment of 300 youth for the JC program with a goal of 50 percent of the JC youth being court-involved.
- **Providing occupational training.** The core component of JC was a "robust vocational experience" that took place during the 20-week residential component of JC. Grantees partnered with community or technical colleges to deliver occupational skills training, individualized career and academic counseling, work-based learning opportunities, and leadership development opportunities.

Exhibit ES.1 presents a typical path through YC and JC. Before the start of YC, youth accepted into the program participated in a two-week Pre-ChalleNGe phase. Youth who completed the Pre-ChalleNGe phase were formally enrolled into the program as cadets and transitioned to the 20-week residential phase. The YC curriculum is structured to promote positive youth development with youth spending the largest share of each day in the education courses to gain a secondary education credential. The daily schedule is highly structured, and youth are closely supervised by staff at all times. After the YC residential phase, youth who were interested and eligible for JC could then complete an additional 20-week residential phase at the JC program location. Both programs were followed by a nonresidential phase that included structured mentoring and continued contact with ChalleNGe staff. In some cases, youth completed YC, returned home, and then enrolled in JC at a later date.

Although each of the three grantees operated its YC and JC programs on a slightly different schedule, they typically enrolled youth twice per year, with each group of youth forming a cohort. Thus, the grantees were expected to serve six cohorts of youth in the JC program, each with about 50 youth, for a total of 300 youth during the entire grant period.

Exhibit ES.1. YC and JC typical program timeline



Research questions. The JC evaluation is an implementation and outcomes study designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how the grantees implemented the DOL JC grants and to examine the outcomes of youth participants.[1] The evaluation addresses six main research questions:

1. How was the Youth ChalleNGe program implemented under the Job ChalleNGe grant?
2. How did the programs recruit and select youth for Job ChalleNGe?
3. How was the Job ChalleNGe program implemented?
4. How did youth in Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe experience the post-residential phase?
5. What were the outcomes of Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe participants?
6. What can we learn from these grants about possible program models to serve at-risk youth?

Data sources. Our analysis draws on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data that bring together information at different points in time to address the evaluation's research questions.

- **Site visit data.** Site visits to all three grantees were conducted twice during program implementation. Site visits included interviews with YC and JC administrators, staff, partners, and employers, observations of program activities, as well as focus groups with YC and JC youth.

[1]In 2015, CEO instructed Mathematica and its subcontractors to conduct an assessment of whether a rigorous impact study would be feasible. Based on this assessment, DOL determined that an impact study was not advisable, because programs could not generate sufficient oversubscription of youth to support the random assignment of some youth into a control group. Since the JC program recruited from a fixed pool of YC graduates, it was not possible to substantially increase recruitment.

- **Survey data.** A background information form administered to YC participants included youth demographics and history of delinquent behavior. Follow-up surveys of JC participants were conducted 16 to 23 months after the youth started the JC program. Survey responses included information on youth experiences in JC, service receipt, and employment outcomes.
- **Administrative data.** National Student Clearinghouse data provided education outcomes including their postsecondary enrollment and credentials. Administrative data from state criminal justice agencies provided measures including arrests, convictions, and offense type.
- **Other sources of data.** Individual-level program records from the YC and JC programs were used to assess representativeness of the youth who consented to participate in the evaluation. Grantee performance reports were used to describe aggregate enrollment in YC and JC, participant characteristics, program completion, and program enrollment and completion for court-involved youth across all cohorts within a program.

Methodology

To answer the study's research questions, we conducted a descriptive analysis to explore how JC was implemented and to investigate JC participants' education, employment, and criminal justice outcomes in the two years following involvement with the program. Our mixed-methods approach blended the qualitative data on program implementation with quantitative data on youth's experiences and outcomes.

Our quantitative analysis focused on a pooled analysis of the three JC grantees. The primary analyses present tabulations from the quantitative data sources to provide insights into the characteristics of participants, services and programs they received, and their outcomes. We also performed subgroup analyses on court-involved youth relative to non-court-involved youth. Because our analyses rely on quantitative data collected only from youth consenting to study participation and who filled out relevant surveys, we weighted all estimates to match the observable characteristics of the population of YC and JC participants.

Findings

DOL had two distinct goals for the JC grants: to improve youth education and employment outcomes by (1) providing more court-involved youth with access to an evidence-based youth program and (2) implementing a new occupationally-intensive program for YC graduates to further support youth development and prepare youth for the labor market. For grantees, the primary focus was the significant undertaking of establishing the new JC program.

Youth ChalleNGe

- **JC grant recipients did not substantially change their YC recruitment or service delivery strategies.** Grantees continued to use previous recruitment strategies that attracted some court-involved youth. Since grantees were not tracking court involvement prior to the

grant, we are not able to determine whether enrollments of court-involved youth changed under the grant.

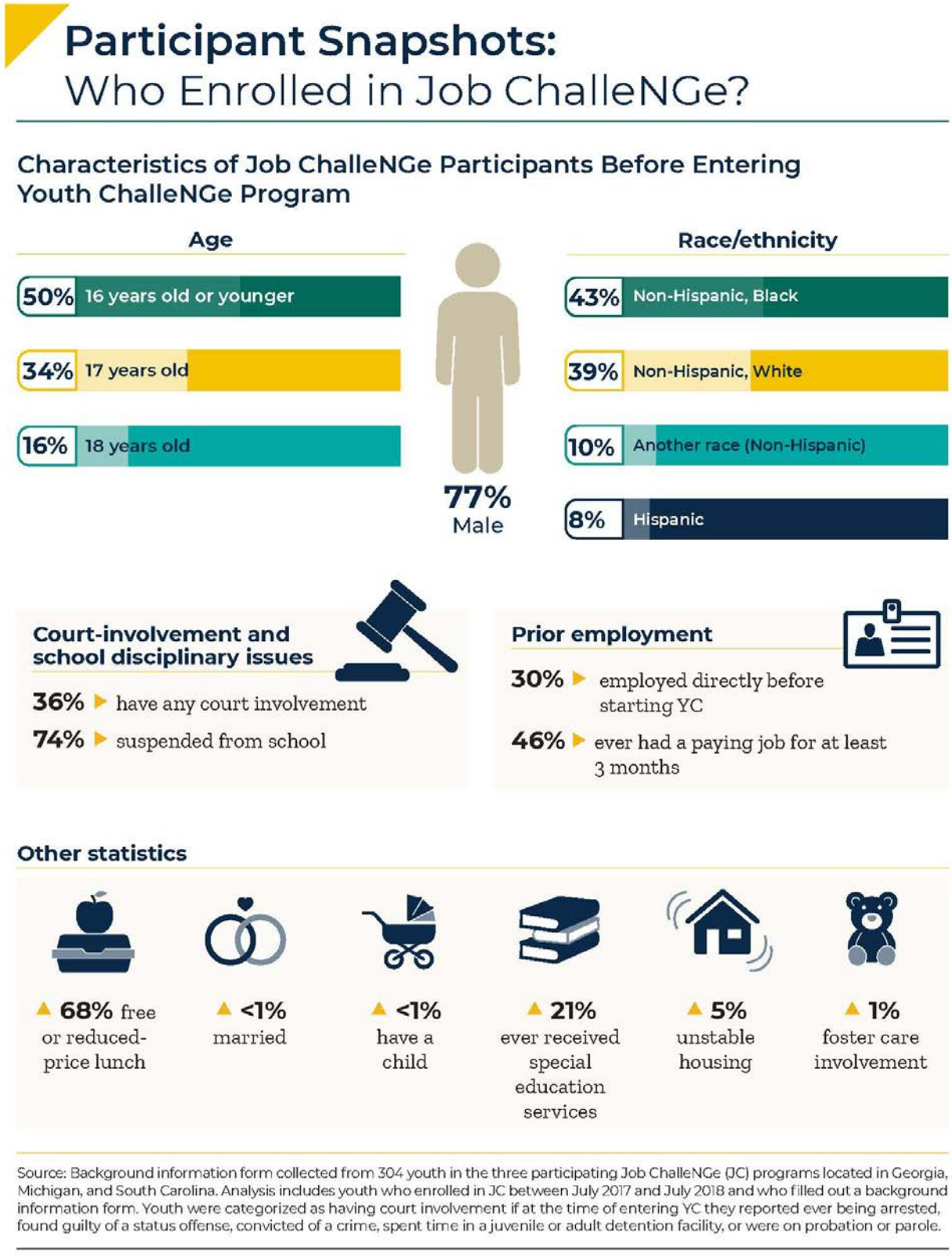
- **Some staff raised concerns about the potential stigma associated with the term "court-involved."** Reacting to these concerns, programs did not focus on court-involved youth in public marketing and did not distinguish between court-involved and non-court-involved youth within YC to avoid stigmatizing youth among their peers.
- **Grantees found it challenging to reconcile DOL's focus on court-involved youth with the existing Department of Defense guidance on YC eligibility criteria.** The YC programs continued to follow Department of Defense guidance requiring that applicants have never been convicted of a felony and have no legal action pending.
- **Court-involved youth had less education at enrollment and higher rates of prior delinquent behavior compared to other YC participants.** Slightly higher portions of court-involved youth were male and had a child. They were more likely to report having been suspended from school or used drugs recently.

Job ChalleNGe

Recruitment and enrollment

- **Grantees used a range of strategies to recruit YC youth into JC.** Methods included starting recruitment early, such as at YC enrollment, maintaining outreach efforts to potential JC recruits over the course of YC, and engaging families to encourage youth to participate in JC. The size of the YC feeder program determined the ease of participant recruitment. The grantees with smaller YC feeder programs could not be selective about JC participants.
- **JC grantees programs recruited and enrolled 905 youth from January 2016 to December 2018.** The grantees met the overall enrollment target of 900 participants with JC enrollment of 333 in Georgia, 301 in Michigan, and 271 in South Carolina.
- **Grantees did not meet the DOL performance target of 50 percent of court-involved youth.** Based on the performance data grantees reported to DOL, 44 percent of JC participants were court-involved youth. Programs reported that they prioritized court-involved youth in the JC application process, but only one of the JC programs consistently had more applications than available program slots.

Exhibit ES.2. JC participant snapshot



Source: Background information form collected from 304 youth in the three participating Job ChalleNGe (JC) programs located in Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina. Analysis includes youth who enrolled in JC between July 2017 and July 2018 and who filled out a background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at the time of entering YC they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or were on probation or parole.

Program implementation and service delivery

- **All three grantees successfully established new occupationally-focused, residential programs for youth.** The three JC programs used different housing environments, ranging from a military base to a rural retreat center. When selecting the location, administrators considered distances to local college partners and the YC program, as well as the availability, quality, and cost of the residential space. Administrators and staff reported that the residential location had implications for coordination with YC, staffing flexibility, transportation costs, and youth experience.
- **Job ChalleNGe provided access to intensive occupational training and supplementary education.** JC programs enrolled youth in community colleges where they took general education courses and participated in certificate-based vocational training programs. Youth who lacked a high school diploma or GED also participated in secondary education services. More than 95 percent of youth received some education service.
- **Partnerships with community colleges were key to providing occupational training programs.** JC programs formed partnerships with community colleges to provide occupational training and other related program services. All participants received some occupational training, and 73 percent received an occupational training certification.
- **Over the course of implementation JC programs tightened their discipline models and provided more supervision of youth than initially planned**. Although all three JC programs initially gave youth substantially more freedom than they had in YC, staff reported that many youth did not have the self-discipline to meet their program goals. Providing more intensive supervision required more staffing than originally planned.

Outcomes of Job ChalleNGe participants

- **Two-thirds of JC participants enrolled in postsecondary education within six months of completing YC, but few youth persisted (Exhibit ES.3).** Despite the high postsecondary enrollment rate during the typical JC program period, only 10 percent of participants were enrolled in post-secondary education at the one-year mark following YC completion,
- **Across the three sites, 86 percent of JC participants were involved in a productive activity approximately 14 months after JC (Exhibit ES.3).** This finding is driven by the fact that 81 percent of JC participants were employed at the time of the survey. Average weekly earnings for youth were $379, and nearly two-thirds reported that JC helped to prepare them for their job.
- **Post-program involvement with the justice system was relatively limited (Exhibit ES.3).** Within one year of YC completion, eight percent of JC participants were arrested and 5 percent were convicted of a new charge.

Exhibit ES.3 Key outcomes for JC participants (reported in percentages unless otherwise specified)

Outcomes	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	p-value[e]
Any productive activity[a,b]	86	81	88	
Postsecondary education				
Enrolled within six months of YC[c]	67	66	68	
Enrolled one year following YC[c]	10	5	13	**
Employment				
Currently working[a]	81	78	82	
Average weekly earnings (dollars)[a]	379	394	374	
Military				
Currently enlisted[a]	13	10	16	
Criminal justice involvement				
Arrested within one year of YC[d]	8	14	5	***
Convicted within one year of YC[d]	5	9	2	***
Sample size (NSC and CJ)	**304**	**103**	**194**	
Sample size (FUS)	**150**	**53**	**95**	

Source: Weighted data from the background information form, follow-up survey, and administrative records.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who completed the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]Source: Follow-up survey (FUS) weighted data.

[b]Any productive activity is defined as employment, education, or military enlistment.

[c]Source: National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) weighted data.

[d]Source: Criminal justice (CJ) administrative weighted data. Arrests and convictions are for new offenses.

[e]Statistical significance is estimated using t-tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Job ChalleNGe service and outcomes for court-involved youth

- **Court- and non-court-involved youth received largely the same services.** JC staff members did not differentiate the services they provided to youth based on whether the youth were court-involved. The only exception was that staff steered some youth with criminal backgrounds away from occupational training in fields in which it might be difficult for people with criminal records to obtain employment.

- **Court-involved JC participants had similar rates of involvement in a productive activity as non-court-involved participants (Exhibit ES.3).** Court-involved participants had similar rates of post-program employment to non-court-involved participants. Although court-involved participants were equally likely to be enrolled in postsecondary

education during the JC period, by one year following YC completion, they were less than half as likely to be enrolled than non-court-involved participants.

- **Court-involved JC participants had higher rates of post-program justice system involved (Exhibit ES.3).** Fourteen percent of court-involved participants were arrested in the year following YC, relative to only 5 percent of non-court-involved participants.

Considerations for the future

As a voluntary and free program that offered a combined 42 weeks of residential programming, Youth and Job ChalleNGe is a unique opportunity for young people to not only "get back on track" but also build their skills for a successful career. All three DOL-funded Job ChalleNGe grantees launched new residential programs and developed partnerships with community colleges to offer participants occupational training and access to a college experience.

At the time of this report's release, the Job ChalleNGe program continues in the three pilot sites, without funding from DOL, plus a few additional locations around the country. This study offers lessons that can help inform current and future programming for Job ChalleNGe. Although the outcomes for JC participants are encouraging, this study does not provide evidence on the program's effectiveness. Understanding the impact of JC on the employment, education, and criminal justice outcomes of youth participants requires an impact study. However, aspects of the JC program, including small cohorts and enrolling from a fixed population of YC graduates, make a random assignment study difficult to conduct. As the number of JC programs increases, there may be additional opportunities to measure the program's impact including evaluation designs that compare the outcomes of JC participants to the outcomes of similar youth enrolled in other YC programs that do not have access to JC.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many youth in America are not on track for labor market success. One factor that increases the risk of poor labor market outcomes among these youth is dropping out of school (Rumberger 2020). Youth who drop out of school are at greater risk for job instability and for lower long-term earnings (Hair et al. 2009). They are also more likely to struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues (Maynard et al. 2015). These challenges are compounded for youth who have early involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems. Even low levels of involvement can disrupt school attendance and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school (Kirk and Sampson 2013; Hjalmarsson 2008). Additional collateral consequences—including restrictions on financial aid, employer discrimination, and occupational licensing restrictions—also create barriers to future labor market success (Simpson and Holthe 2018). Youth with prior involvement in the justice system need targeted support to overcome these barriers (Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention 2000).

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe (YC) Program has been shown to improve education and labor market outcomes for high school dropouts between the ages of 16 and 18 (Millenky et al. 2011). The YC model includes a 20-week, community-based residential program followed by a year of post-program mentoring that aims to build youth confidence and maturity, teach practical life skills, and help youth obtain a high school diploma or GED. Building on this successful model, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded YC programs in three communities, to expand their programs to include more court-involved youth and to create a follow-on residential occupational training program called Job ChalleNGe (JC).

DOL's Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) contracted with Mathematica and its subcontractors Social Policy Research Associates and MDRC to evaluate the JC grants. The evaluation examined the implementation of these grants and the outcomes for youth participants. This report describes our findings and presents lessons from the experiences of the three grantees and participating youth.

A. The Youth ChalleNGe program model and Job ChalleNGe expansion

DOL's JC grant builds on the established YC program model and lessons learned from the evaluation of YC.

1. Youth ChalleNGe program

YC is authorized by the National Guard and is funded through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Defense and each state's National Guard. Since it was first piloted in 1993, YC has grown to 41 programs across 30 states. YC programs typically enroll two cohorts, or "classes" of youth annually. Each YC class has approximately 100 youth.

The goal of YC is to build youth confidence and maturity, teach practical life skills, and help youth obtain a high school diploma or GED. YC's numerous activities address its eight core pillars: (1) leadership and followership, (2) responsible citizenship, (3) service to community, (4) life coping skills, (5) physical fitness, (6) health and hygiene, (7) job skills, and (8) academic excellence.

YC operates as a quasi-military environment, in which participants, known as cadets, live in barracks-style housing and a disciplined environment for about 20 weeks—the residential phase. Cadets wear their hair short and dress in military uniforms. The daily schedule is highly structured with almost no downtime, and cadets are closely supervised by staff at all times.

Upon completing the residential phase, participants receive a year of structured mentoring designed to help them transition back into their communities. The mentoring program is distinctive, in that young people nominate their own mentors during the application process. YC initiates the mentoring relationship partway through the residential phase, after the staff screen and train the mentors. Mentors can be family members, neighbors, or other adults the youth and staff expect will provide a positive and consistent influence on the youth. During the post-residential phase, staff maintain contact with both YC graduates and their mentors at least monthly, working with mentors to help solve problems and monitor each participant's progress.

2. Evidence on the effectiveness of Youth ChalleNGe

YC has been documented to improve outcomes for youth. The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Evaluation (ChalleNGe Evaluation), a 10-site, random assignment evaluation of YC led by MDRC, found large positive impacts for youth in the program group (Millenky et al. 2011). About 3,000 young people entered the study in 2005 and 2006. Some were randomly assigned to the program group, which could enroll in YC, while others were randomly assigned to a control group that could not enroll in YC. Data from the YC management information system show that about 83 percent of the program group started the program, 68 percent completed the two-week assessment and orientation period and formally enrolled, and 53 percent graduated. The key findings are summarized in the box "Key findings from the ChalleNGe Evaluation."

Key Findings from the ChalleNGe Evaluation (Millenky et al. 2011)

Three years after study enrollment, survey data showed that the program group had attained higher levels of education and achieved better labor market outcomes. Relative to the control group, the program group was:

- More likely to have obtained a GED and to have earned college credits
- More likely to be employed at the time of the survey
- More likely to have higher earnings (the program group earned about 20 percent more)

These impacts were not statistically different for youth with and without justice system involvement.

Despite these early and positive impacts, follow-up interviews confirmed that even program graduates had difficulty gaining a foothold in college or the labor market.

The report concluded with a set of recommendations to enhance the post-residential phase of the program to help young people negotiate the difficult transition from the highly structured and supportive residential program to their communities. One recommendation was to build and provide a stronger vocational training component, either during or after the residential phase of the YC program.

3. Job ChalleNGe grants

In 2015, DOL issued a total of $12 million in JC grants to YC programs in Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina (Exhibit I.1). The grants included 3 months of planning and 36 months of service delivery during which grantees were expected to serve six cohorts of youth in the JC program.

Exhibit I.1. JC grantees

Grantee name		Youth ChalleNGe program name	Job ChalleNGe program name	Job ChalleNGe location	Occupational training partner
	National Guard Youth ChalleNGe/Job ChalleNGe Academy	Fort Stewart Georgia Youth ChalleNGe Academy	Georgia Job ChalleNGe Program	Fort Stewart, Georgia	Savannah Technical College
	Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs	Michigan Youth ChalleNGe Academy	Michigan Job ChalleNGe Program	Fort Custer Training Center, Battle Creek, Michigan	Kellogg Community College (Regional Manufacturing and Training Center)
	South Carolina Military Department	South Carolina Youth ChalleNGe Academy	South Carolina Youth ChalleNGe Academy POST ChalleNGe Program	Aiken, South Carolina	Aiken Technical College

DOL had two explicit goals for the JC grants: to improve youth education and employment outcomes by (1) expanding the target population of YC to include more youth who have been involved with the courts and (2) adding a residential occupational training component, known as JC, that would be available as an option for YC graduates (DOL 2015).

- **Serving court-involved youth.** The goal to expand services to more court-involved youth aimed to make a difference in the lives of youth who face additional barriers to education and employment because of their court involvement. Substantial research suggests that to reduce the likelihood of recidivism and increase their chances for success, youth involved in the justice system need specific supports and interventions, such as enrollment in schooling or

job training programs, as well as access to housing and adult mentors (Beale-Spencer and Jones-Walker 2004). These supports, which are part of YC and JC, can make a difference in youth's ability to find and keep jobs (Mears and Travis 2004). Although DOL did not set an explicit target for the increase in the number of court-involved youth to be served by YC, each grantee had a target enrollment of 300 youth for the JC program with a goal of 50 percent of the JC youth being court-involved.

- **Providing occupational training.** The core component of JC was a "robust vocational experience" that took place during the 20-week residential component of JC. Grantees partnered with community or technical colleges to deliver occupational skills training, individualized career and academic counseling, work-based learning opportunities, and leadership development opportunities.

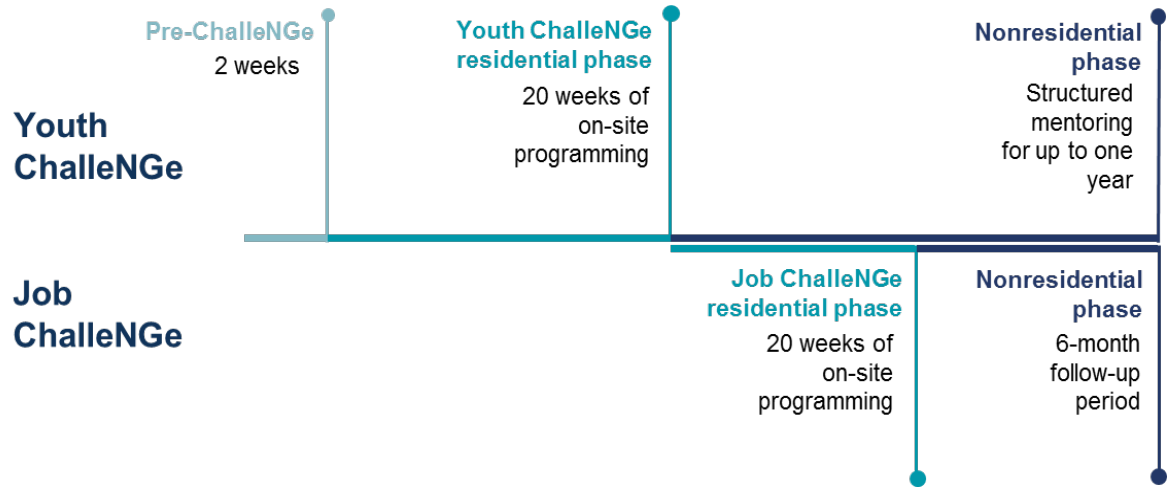
In addition to the explicit goals set by DOL, grantee staff viewed JC as a way to help prepare youth for life beyond YC. For example, staff discussed that JC aimed to allow youth more freedom than YC, so that youth were ready to make healthy choices on their own after leaving the residential program. Staff also viewed JC as an opportunity to arm youth with the skills they needed to succeed in school or work.

For additional information on the specific grantees, see the program profiles in Appendix A.

Exhibit I.2 presents a typical path through YC and JC. Before the start of YC, youth accepted into the program participated in a two-week Pre-ChalleNGe phase. Pre-ChalleNGe is a physically and psychologically demanding assessment and orientation period during which youth were introduced to the program's rules and expectations; learned military bearing, discipline, and teamwork; and began physical fitness training. Youth who completed the Pre-ChalleNGe phase were formally enrolled into the program as cadets and transitioned to the 20-week residential phase. After the YC residential phase, youth who were interested and eligible for JC could then complete an additional 20-week residential phase at the JC program location. Both programs were followed by a nonresidential phase that included structured mentoring and continued contact with ChalleNGe staff. In some cases, youth completed YC, returned home, and then enrolled in JC at a later date.

Although each of the three grantees operated its YC and JC programs on a slightly different schedule, they typically enrolled youth twice per year, with each group of youth forming a cohort. Thus, the grantees were expected to serve six cohorts of youth in the JC program, each with about 50 youth, for a total of 300 youth during the entire grant period.

Exhibit I.2. YC and JC typical program timeline



B. The Job ChalleNGe Evaluation

The JC evaluation is an implementation and outcomes study designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how the grantees implemented the DOL JC grants and to examine the outcomes of youth participants.[2] The evaluation addresses six main research questions:

1. How was the Youth ChalleNGe program implemented under the Job ChalleNGe grant?
2. How did the programs recruit and select youth for Job ChalleNGe?
3. How was the Job ChalleNGe program implemented?
4. How did youth in Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe experience the post-residential phase?
5. What were the outcomes of Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe participants?
6. What can we learn from these grants about possible program models to serve at-risk youth?

1. Study enrollment

Each DOL grant funded JC services to six cohorts of youth, with the first cohort beginning the YC program in July 2015 and the final cohort beginning the JC program in July 2018 (Exhibit

[2] In 2015, CEO instructed Mathematica and its subcontractors to conduct an assessment of whether a rigorous impact study would be feasible. Based on this assessment, DOL determined that an impact study was not advisable, because programs could not generate sufficient oversubscription of youth to support the random assignment of some youth into a control group. Even if recruitment efforts increased, the study would not have had enough sample size to answer the key research questions with sufficient statistical precision.

(continued)

I.3). The implementation study included all six cohorts of YC youth and all six cohorts of JC youth.[3] The outcomes study included youth from the final three cohorts of YC and JC.[4]

Exhibit I.3. Timing of study enrollment

Source: Staff interviews.

Note: The timing of the cohorts was uniform across grantees. YC Cohorts 4-6 and JC Cohorts 4-6 are included in the outcomes study.

Enrollment in the outcomes study began when youth enrolled in the program as they entered the residential phase of the program. The enrollment process included obtaining (1) youth consent for youth age 18 and (2) parent or guardian consent and youth assent for youth under the age of 18. If the study team was not able to obtain their consent at entry into YC or their parent was not present to give consent at that time, a second attempt was made to enroll JC participants in the study at the start of the JC residential phase. Across all three grantees, 984 of the 1,460 YC youth participated in the outcomes study (meaning 67 percent of the YC youth consented to be in the study). Of the YC youth, 392 youth completed YC cohorts four through six and enrolled in JC, of which 304 JC youth participated in the outcomes study (meaning 78 percent of JC youth consented to be part of the study). To adjust for bias due to nonconsent, all analyses are weighted such that the observable characteristics of the sample are representative of the observable characteristics of the overall sample.

2. Data collection

Our analysis draws on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data from seven primary sources that bring together information at different points in time to address the evaluation's research questions. Exhibit I.4 lists the programs and cohorts for which we obtained each individual-level data source. For a detailed description of each quantitative data source, see Appendix B.

- **Site visits** to all three grantees were conducted twice during program implementation (fall 2017 and spring 2018). Site visits included interviews with YC and JC administrators, staff,

[3] YC study-cohorts YC1 through YC6 correspond to what the YC Academy refers to as Classes 45 through 50.

[4] Youth in the first three cohorts of YC and the first three cohorts of JC were not included in the outcomes study, because grant activities were underway before the study received approval from the Office of Management and Budget to start enrollment into the outcomes study.

partners, and employers, observations of program activities, as well as focus groups with YC and JC youth. In total, we conducted interviews with 59 administrators and staff across the three programs, staff from 11 partner organizations, and one employer partner from each site. We also conducted 3 focus groups with YC youth and 6 focus groups with JC youth. Across all 9 focus groups, 39 youth participated. Because youth were not randomly selected for the focus groups, and hence they do not present a representative perspective of all YC and JC participants, data collected from the focus groups are used to provide anecdotal support of findings based on other data sources; no findings in the report are based solely on the information from the focus groups.

- **Background information form.** After obtaining consent from youth (or assent from youth under 18 with consent from their parent or guardian), the study team collected data on youth demographics, whether they were involved in the foster care system, history of delinquent behavior, and contact information through the background information form. This data was collected over the course of YC or at JC program entry, but the questions referred to experiences before YC. Overall, 984 youth in YC cohorts 4-6 filled out a background information form.
- **Program data**. We collected individual-level program records from the YC and JC programs. Data included identified records for youth enrolled in the study and deidentified records for the remainder of program participants. We requested data on participant characteristics, services, and program completion. We used this data to assess representativeness of the youth who consented to participate in the evaluation. Due to variation in data availability and quality across programs, we were unable to conduct additional analyses to assess service receipt, duration of involvement, or program completion rates.
- **Follow-up surveys of JC participants** were conducted 16 to 23 months after the youth started the JC program. One hundred fifty JC youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 completed the follow-up survey through the web (a 45 percent response rate for consenting youth in these cohorts). To address differences, all follow-up survey analyses are weighted so that the observable characteristics of the sample are representative of the observable characteristics of the full set of JC youth. For more details on the characteristics of respondents relative to nonrespondents and our calculation of survey weights, see Appendix C. Survey responses included information on youth experiences in JC, service receipt, and employment outcomes. We also conducted a short monthly text survey in the period between JC completion and the follow-up survey to explore whether this approach could provide periodic snapshots of employment and education status. The text survey sample included 113 youth from Cohorts 5 and 6 who indicated on the background information form that they were willing to receive text messages from the evaluation. Of these youth, only 12 responded to all six months of the survey, and only 32 responded to at least one month. See Appendix B for more details on survey data collection. Given the low response rate of the text-survey data collection, these data were used to create illustrative descriptions of youth employment, but no study findings are based on these data.

- **National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)**. We collected NSC data to obtain education outcomes including their postsecondary enrollment and credentials. The NSC maintains a comprehensive administrative database on more than 99 percent of U.S. colleges and universities with information on student enrollment in post-secondary education, school characteristics, program type, degrees obtained, and program of study. The NSC does not contain information from institutions other than colleges and universities, such as trade schools or apprenticeship programs. For more details on the NSC, see Appendix B.
- **State criminal justice records.** We collected administrative data on criminal justice involvement from the state agencies for youth who consented. Measures include arrests, convictions, and offense type. The administrative data are limited to adult offenses, although the age at which youth can be charged as adults varies across the three grantee states. Additionally, data received from each state varied in format and content; for example, some states did not provide information on arrests that did not result in a conviction, while other states did. For a description of the data provided by each state, see Appendix B.
- **Grantee performance reports** from the quarter ending March 2019 were used to describe aggregate enrollment in YC and JC, participant characteristics, program completion, and program enrollment and completion for court-involved youth across all cohorts within a program.

Exhibit I.4. Quantitative data sources and cohorts included

	Youth ChalleNGe	Job ChalleNGe
Data source		
Background information form	YC 4–6	JC 4–6
Program data	YC 4–6	JC 4–6
Follow-up survey	None	JC 4–6
Text message survey [a]	None	JC 5–6
NSC	YC 4–6	JC 4–6
State criminal justice data	YC 4–6	JC 4–6
Grantee performance reports	YC 1-6	JC 1-6

[a]The text message survey sample is limited to youth who gave permission to be contacted by text message.

NSC = National Student Clearinghouse.

3. Analysis

To answer the study's research questions, we conducted a descriptive analysis to explore how JC was implemented and to investigate JC participants' education, employment, and criminal justice outcomes in the two years following involvement with the program. Our mixed-methods approach blended the qualitative data on program implementation with quantitative data on

youth's experiences and outcomes. Using both types of data provided a broader perspective on the program than reliance on a single type of information.

We identified key themes and topics in the qualitative data collected during site visits using a two-stage coding analysis. In the first phase, we identified broad themes and takeaways on key topics related to the research questions. In the second stage, we took an inductive approach, whereby we developed more descriptive codes that could better capture the range of strategies that grantees used on a given topic. For example, if in the first phase we coded broadly for challenges encountered, in the second phase, we could have coded for specific types of challenges to assess whether certain challenges occurred across all three grantees or were reported at one or two grantees only.

Our quantitative analysis focused on a pooled analysis of the three JC grantees. Pooling analyses across grantees increased the sample size and enabled more detailed analyses (for example, analyses on subgroups of participants). It also allowed us to present results for the universe of JC grantees. However, this approach may mask meaningful variation across grantees. Therefore, we present additional results for key analyses by grantee in Appendix E.

Our primary analyses present tabulations from the quantitative data sources to provide insights into the characteristics of participants, services and programs they received, and their outcomes. We also performed subgroup analyses on court-involved youth relative to non-court-involved youth. Given that the grantees used different criteria to define which youth were court-involved (see Chapter II for more information), we identified which youth were or were not court-involved using self-reports on justice system involvement prior to the YC program from the background information form. This process enabled us to measure court involvement consistently across grantees. To identify whether there were differences in experiences and outcomes between subgroups of youth, such as those who were and were not court-involved, we also conduct statistical tests based on chi-squared analyses of the tabulations. We present statistical significance using thresholds of 1, 5, and 10 percent. Statistical tests represent the statistical significance if we consider our true population to be a hypothetical universe of all potential JC participants.

Because our analyses rely on quantitative data from youth who consented to the study and completed relevant surveys, our sample does not include the full population of YC and JC participants in the three grantee programs. This approach may lead to bias if the youth who participate in the study are not representative of the full population of program youth. To address potential bias due to nonconsent and nonresponse, we weighted all estimates to match the observable characteristics of the population of YC and JC participants. This process is described in more detail in Appendix C.

Findings from this study reflect the implementation of JC under the DOL JC grants. These results represent the experiences of three programs and may not be generalizable to other YC programs that might implement a JC program. For example, if other YC programs implement a

JC program with other sources of funding, they may not have the same required program services or a focus on court-involved youth. This study also does not present a causal analysis of the impact of JC on participants. There are many factors that impacted JC youth, and we are unable to identify how each factor impacted program experiences and participant outcomes.

The remaining chapters of the report map to the research questions as follows:

- Chapter II describes the extent to which grantees adapted their YC programs under the JC grant, including whether and how they recruited more court-involved youth (Research Question 1).
- Chapter III relays how JC programs recruited and selected youth and describes JC participants, including how JC participants compare with YC-only participants and JC program attrition (Research Question 2).
- Chapter IV describes the JC residential environment and housing, JC staffing, and the disciplinary approaches staff used (Research Question 3).
- Chapter V details the educational, occupational, and nonacademic services JC participants received as well as youths' connections to the program during the post-residential phase (Research Questions 3 and 4).
- Chapter VI presents post-program outcomes for JC participants overall and compared with outcomes for YC-only youth (Research Question 5).
- Chapter VII summarizes the key findings, lessons learned from the implementation of JC, and considerations for other programs serving youth (Research Question 6).
- The appendices included in this report include one-page profiles on each of the JC grantees (Appendix A), descriptions of the quantitative data sources (Appendix B), information on the weighting for study nonconsent and survey nonresponse (Appendix C), regression analyses of post-program outcomes (Appendix D), grantee-specific results (Appendix E), follow-up survey estimates of criminal justice outcomes (Appendix F), and estimates of key participant outcomes using the grantee-defined measures for whether a youth had court and/or justice involvement (Appendix G).

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH CHALLENGE UNDER THE JOB CHALLENGE GRANT

A central goal of the JC grants was to increase enrollment of court-involved youth into YC. From January 2016 to December 2018, the three YC programs that received JC grants reported enrolling 3,095 youth into YC, 38 percent of which had some form of court or justice involvement. This chapter describes how YC program adjusted under the JC grants, and in response to the increased focus on court-involved youth, with regard to YC program recruitment and enrollment, YC services, the characteristics of YC participants, and YC program completion. The findings in this chapter are based primarily on information shared during interviews with YC program staff, focus groups with youth, and data collected on youth through the background information form.

Key Findings

- **JC grant recipients did not substantially change their YC recruitment or service delivery strategies.** Grantees continued to use previous recruitment strategies that attracted some court-involved youth. However, grantees worked to better identify and document court involvement among youth already enrolled in YC.
- **Grantees created their own definitions of "court-involved."** Some grantees used more expansive definitions that included youth in foster care or youth with family court cases, while others defined court involvement more narrowly as youth with criminal offense histories.
- **Some staff raised concerns about the potential stigma associated with the term "court-involved."** Reacting to these concerns, programs did not focus on court-involved youth in public marketing and did not distinguish between court-involved and non-court-involved youth within YC to avoid stigmatizing youth among their peers.
- **Grantees found it challenging to reconcile DOL's focus on court-involved youth with the existing Department of Defense guidance on YC eligibility criteria.** The YC programs continued to follow Department of Defense guidance requiring that applicants have never been convicted of a felony and have no legal action pending.
- **YC programs enrolled youth who were disconnected from school and at risk of unstable employment in the future.** Most youth entered YC at ages 16 or 17, from low income households, and with only some high school education. Across the three YC programs, data collected at baseline showed an average of 41 percent of participants had some form of court involvement.
- **Court-involved youth had a similar racial/ethnic composition to other YC participants but had less education at enrollment and higher rates of prior delinquent behavior.** Slightly higher portions of court-involved youth were male and had a child. They also had completed fewer years of education and were more likely to report having been suspended from school or used drugs recently.

A. Defining court involvement

Increasing enrollment of court-involved youth was a central objective of the JC grants. To meet this objective, grantees needed to define what constituted court involvement, but grantees found it challenging to operationalize this definition. In the original grant funding announcement, DOL defined court-involved youth as youth who had come into contact with the juvenile justice system through a status offense[5] or by committing a delinquent act and who had not been convicted as adults (DOL 2015). During site visit interviews, JC and YC staff members reported confusion around the types of court and justice system involvement that classify a youth as "court-involved" but do not lead to their exclusion from YC based on Department of Defense (DoD) eligibility guidelines. JC staff members generally used a broad definition for JC enrollment purposes and included any interaction with juvenile courts, regardless of adjudication, as indicating court involvement. This approach meant that YC enrollment remained largely unchanged under the JC grants.

There was some variation in how the programs defined court involvement. The definitions used by Michigan and South Carolina were broader than Georgia's definition; they counted noncriminal interactions with the courts—such as through family courts governing foster care, adoption, or divorce—as court involvement. All three YC programs also set individual exclusionary criteria. Georgia, for example, would not accept youth on probation without a letter indicating that probation would be suspended during enrollment in YC. In South Carolina, eligibility criteria excluded anyone with a violent offense, such as assault or rape. The Michigan YC program screened out youth with involvement in the justice system who appeared to be interested in YC only as a way to avoid court sanctions; youth had to demonstrate they were intrinsically motivated to be in the program. See Exhibit II.1 for each grantee's definition of court-involved youth. For estimates of court-involvement rates and select outcomes by court-involvement based on grantee definitions in program data, see Appendix G.

Exhibit II.1. Grantee-specific definitions of court-involved youth

Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Any juvenile in the court system, excluding youth in the foster care system. Applicants who were on probation were required to obtain a letter stating their probation would be suspended during participation.	Anyone who was formally adjudicated, arrested, or charged. Also included anyone in the foster care system or family court system. Youth with open or pending cases and youth on probation were not eligible.	Anyone who was involved with the juvenile system, adult system, or social services (homeless or foster youth). Youth with pending juvenile charges were eligible. Youth with violent offenses were not eligible.

Source: JC staff interviews.

[5] A status defense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

B. Recruitment and enrollment

Broadly, YC programs have established statewide recruitment and enrollment procedures. YC is marketed as a program that aims "to intervene in and reclaim the lives of at-risk youth to produce program graduates with the values and skills necessary to excel as adults." Each state operated its own application process, with youth required to submit a written application and participate in an interview. The overall eligibility criteria are established by the National Guard (see box "YC eligibility criteria").

1. Recruiting court-involved youth for Youth ChalleNGe

YC staff members reported in interviews with study team members that they had a history of serving youth with court involvement prior to the JC grant. As a result, staff did not perceive a need to make major changes to their YC recruitment strategies as part of the JC grant implementation. YC staff also expressed that they did not add court involvement to general marketing materials because they did not want YC to develop a reputation as a program for court-involved youth due to a perceived stigma by the larger public.

YC eligibility criteria

- Committed to making a change in their life
- Between 16 and 18 years of age
- U.S. Citizen or permanent resident
- Educationally at risk or high school dropout
- Voluntary enrollment
- Drug-free (will be drug tested)
- Physically and mentally capable to participate in the program with reasonable accommodations for physical and other disabilities
- Not currently on parole or probation for other than juvenile status offenses, not awaiting sentencing, not under indictment, accused or convicted of a felony; cannot have any pending court dates once the program starts

Source: DoD Instruction 1025.8 (2002)

Staff from two YC programs reported maintaining previous relationships with justice system partners. South Carolina staff members reported that they built relationships with the Department of Juvenile Justice and family courts prior to the start of their JC grant, and continued to maintain these relationships during the grant. Similarly, Michigan continued to collaborate with local judges who had previously made referrals to YC as part of the court's diversion efforts. Recruitment staff at these YC programs discussed how they were continually conducting outreach and trying to foster new connections with the justice system. However, these changes were already underway at the start of JC and were not driven by the JC grants.

Staff members at all three YC programs made administrative changes to their application and intake procedures to gather additional information on court involvement. YC programs already asked applicants about their criminal histories and, if needed, conducted a criminal background check to comply with National Guard eligibility criteria, but they collected and tracked different

information to comply with the DOL requirements. YC staff reported changing the amount of criminal justice system information that they gathered on prospective participants, including where and how they recorded when youth self-identified as court-involved so they could share this information with JC program staff members. For example, in South Carolina, YC staff members began to document any justice-system involvement, including when a court had ordered a young person to enroll in the YC program. Michigan also became more intentional about asking youth at YC enrollment whether they had any court involvement and developed questions to probe for interactions with the justice system. For example, they asked applicants whether they had ever been handcuffed or had records expunged.

We are not able to measure whether the enrollment of court-involved youth increased under the JC grant. Prior to the JC grant, YC did not track the number of court-involved youth who enrolled in the program. The ChalleNGe Evaluation conducted by confirms that YC was already serving youth with court involvement. In that study, 34 percent of youth reported having ever been arrested, and 19 percent reported having ever been convicted (Millenky et al. 2010).

C. Youth ChalleNGe services under the Job ChalleNGe grant

YC staff indicated during site visit interviews that they made very few, if any, changes to their YC program, including services and disciplinary policies, as a result of the JC grants. In Georgia and Michigan, only a few staff members knew which youth were court-involved. For instance, in Georgia, interview respondents reported that they would not know which youth were court-involved outside of those who had to visit their probation officer or social worker or used their probation officer as a mentor.

> "I don't know the difference in working with them [justice-involved kids] or a kid who's never even smoked a cigarette. I couldn't tell you."
>
> —JC staff

Overall, there was little distinction made within the programs between court-involved and non-court-involved youth. Staff members reported concerns that drawing attention to the court-involved youth population might negatively affect the youth themselves and the perception of them by other youth. For example, in Michigan, YC staff members described the fear that using the term court-involved or asking youth to self-identify as court-involved would stigmatize and negatively label the program and youth, affecting their perceptions of themselves and others' perceptions of them. Staff at all sites also reported that they did not perceive a difference between the court-involved and non-court-involved youth, and therefore disliked the categorization. Youth in focus groups also reported disliking the term "at-risk" or being identified as court-involved, because not all of them had been involved with the justice system or felt the distinction was relevant to their lives.

> "They say 'at-risk youth' like we're criminals. Everybody at risk. They make it seem like it's a juvenile [justice program] or something like that."
>
> —YC participant

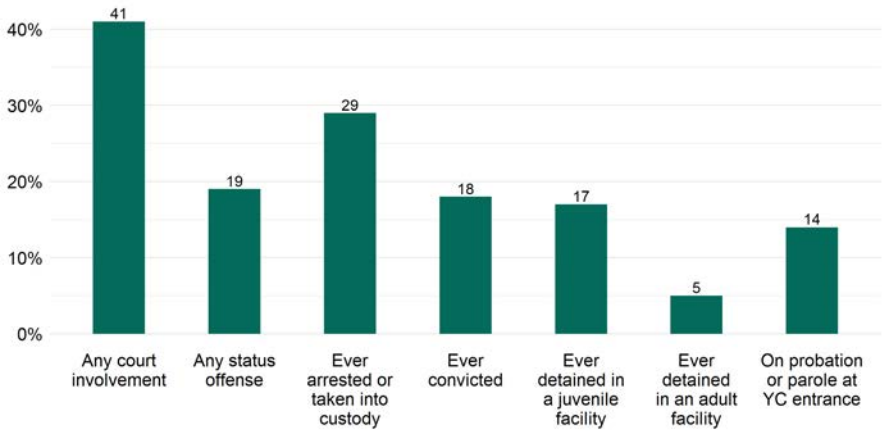
D. Snapshot of Youth ChalleNGe participants

The three YC programs enrolled 3,095 YC participants during implementation of the JC grants. Among the 984 youth that completed a study baseline information form, 80 percent were male and more than half (53 percent) were 16 at program entry. Half of participants (50 percent) identified as non-Hispanic black, 32 percent as non-Hispanic white, and the remainder as Hispanic, mixed race, or another race. For a snapshot of the characteristics of YC participants, see Exhibit II.4.

Many YC youth face risk-factors or barriers to continuing their education or finding and maintaining stable employment, such as low levels of education, limited work history, and for some youth, having prior justice involvement. Only 26 percent of youth had completed grade 11 or higher, and almost none of the youth reported having a GED or high school diploma. Youth did have some labor market experience, with 44 percent reporting that they held a job for at least three months. Only 4 percent of youth reported unstable living situation, 3 percent had children, and less than 1 percent were married. Most youth came from low income backgrounds, with almost 75 percent reporting eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch in the two years prior to YC enrollment. Along most dimensions, the YC participant characteristics were similar across the three programs, but there was substantial variation in the racial composition of the three programs (see Appendix E).

Forty-one percent of YC participants reported some court involvement prior to program entry (Exhibit II.2). This rate is estimated based on youth self-reports of ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or detained in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.[6] Among the YC participants, 29 percent reported that they were ever arrested or taken into custody, and 18 percent reported a conviction. Seventeen percent had been detained in a juvenile facility, and 5 percent in an adult facility. The overall rate

Exhibit II.2. Types of YC youth court-involvement



Source: Background information form weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who filled out the background information form. N = 984.

[6] To apply a uniform definition of court involvement across the three YC programs, these statistics and those shown in the snapshot above define court-involvement based on the background information forms collected at the time of study enrollment.

of self-reported court involvement is slightly higher than the 36 percent reported on grantee performance reports submitted to DOL. The difference could reflect either differences across cohorts (the background information forms were collected for Cohorts 4–6 while the performance reports include all six cohorts) or differences in how program staff and youth define and report court involvement.

When comparing court-involved and non-court-involved youth, demographic characteristics were relatively similar (Exhibit II.3), but court-involved youth had lower levels of education at enrollment (Exhibit II.5) and higher rates of self-reported delinquent behavior (Exhibit II.6). In particular, 88 percent of court-involved youth had a prior school suspension compared to 74 percent of non-court-involved youth. There were also significant differences in prior drug use. Seventy percent of court-involved youth had used marijuana in the six months prior to YC enrollment compared to 43 percent of non-court-involved youth. Similarly, 35 percent of court-involved youth used another drug in the six months prior to YC enrollment compared to 15 percent of non-court-involved youth.

Exhibit II.3. Baseline characteristics of YC youth overall and by status of court involvement (reported in percentages)

Characteristics	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
Age				
16	53	55	51	
17	36	35	36	
18	12	10	14	
Male	80	84	78	**
Race and ethnicity				
Hispanic	8	8	9	
Non-Hispanic, black	50	52	49	
Non-Hispanic, white	32	32	31	
Non-Hispanic, other race	10	7	11	
Involved in foster care[b]	1	2	1	
Free and reduced-price lunch status[b]	73	73	72	
Unstable housing[b]	4	5	3	
Ever received special education services	19	20	18	
Married	0	0	0	
Has a child	3	6	2	***
Sample size	**984**	**391**	**566**	

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who filled out the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[b]Foster care and housing status were self-reported at the time of the background information form collection. Free and reduced-price lunch status was self-reported based on the two years prior to background information form collection.

Exhibit II.4. YC participant snapshot

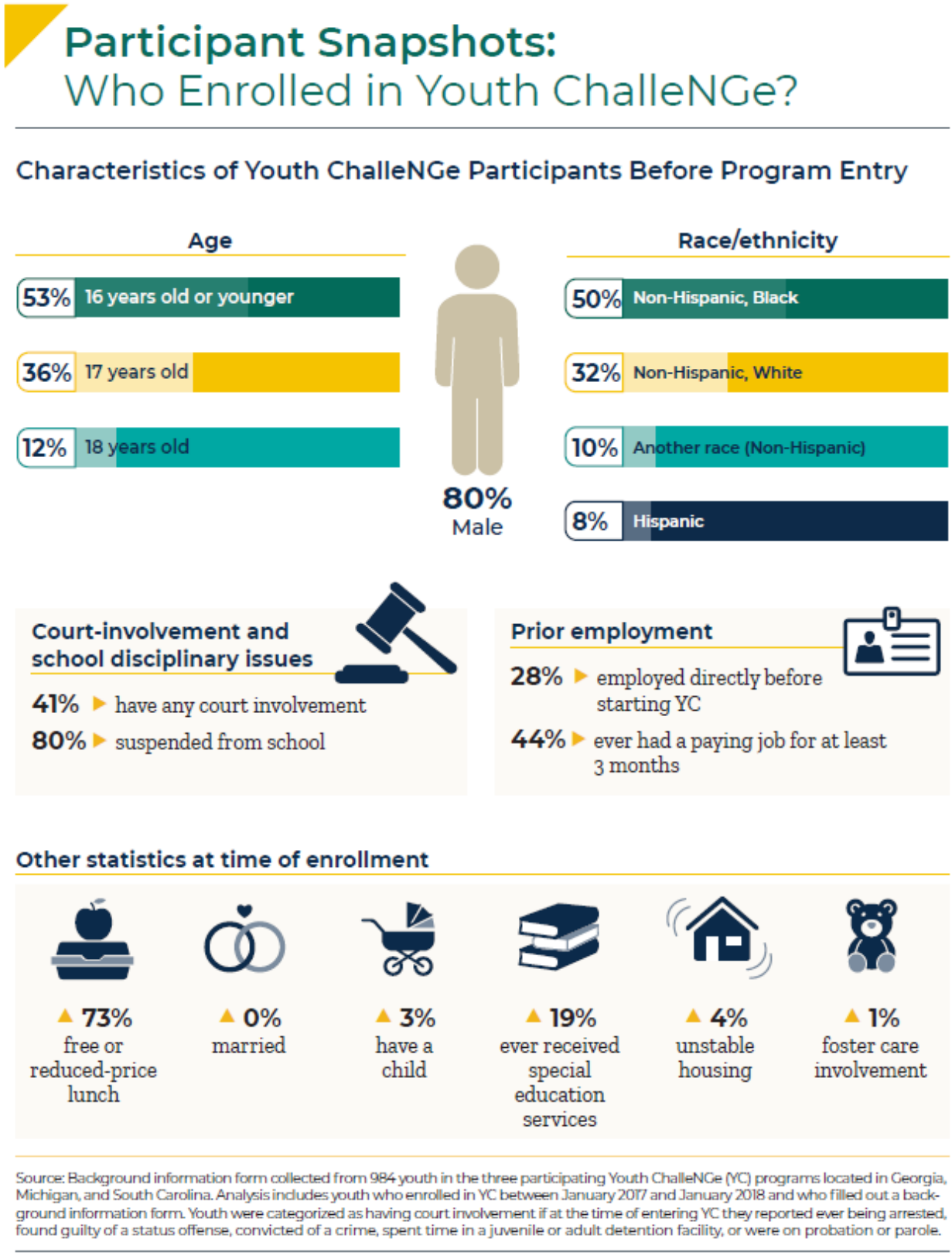


Exhibit II.5. Baseline education and employment of YC youth overall and by status of court involvement (reported in percentages)

Characteristics	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	p-value[a]
Educational attainment				
Last grade completed in school				**
8th grade or below	8	7	8	
9th grade	26	29	23	
10th grade	40	43	38	
11th grade	22	17	26	
12th grade	4	4	4	
High school diploma or GED	2	1	2	
Employment				
Employed directly before YC	28	30	27	
Ever had a paying job for ≥ 3 months	44	46	42	
Sample size	**984**	**391**	**566**	

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who filled out the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, non-court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court-involvement. Twenty-seven sample members were missing information on court involvement.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Exhibit II.6. Self-reported delinquent behavior and justice-system involvement of YC youth overall and by status of court-involvement (reported in percentages)

Characteristics	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	p-value[a]
Ever suspended	80	88	74	***
Used marijuana in past six months	54	70	43	***
Used another drug in past six months	23	35	15	***
Any court involvement	41	100		
Ever arrested or taken into custody	29	72		
Any status offense[b]	19	47		
Ever convicted	18	46		
Ever detained in a juvenile facility	17	41		
Ever detained in an adult facility	5	13		
On probation or parole at YC entrance	14	34		
Sample size	**984**	**391**	**566**	

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who filled out the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, non-court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Twenty-seven sample members were missing information on court involvement.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[b]A status offense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

E. Youth ChalleNGe program completion

Based on the aggregate performance reports grantees submitted to DOL, court-involved youth appear to complete the YC portion of the program at a rate similar to YC participants overall. Fifty-nine percent of all YC participants completed the program. For court-involved youth, the completion rate was 63 percent.[7] The program-specific completion rates are included in the program profiles (see Appendix A). The similar completion rates of court-involved youth and all YC youth are consistent with impressions from staff that this indicator of court-involvement was not a defining characteristic for youth participants.

[7] These estimates of YC completion are based on aggregate performance reports that the grantees submitted to DOL. These reports include the overall YC program completion rate and the program completion rate for court-involved participants. The progress reports do not present completion rates for non-court-involved participants.

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III. JOB CHALLENGE RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Staff from JC began recruiting youth as early as at YC enrollment and persisted throughout the course of the YC program. As a result, YC youth heard about JC multiple times from different individuals, including YC staff, JC staff, and JC participants (former YC cadets). Overall, the three JC programs recruited and enrolled 905 youth between January 2016 and December 2018, including 333 in Georgia, 301 in Michigan, and 271 in South Carolina, which exceeded the overall goal of 900 participants. This chapter discusses the processes programs used to recruit and screen youth, and describes the characteristics of JC youth, compares JC youth with youth who were only in YC. The findings in this chapter are based on information shared by YC and JC program staff during interviews, youth focus groups, and data collected on youth through the background information form and the follow-up survey.

Key Findings

- **Grantees used a range of strategies to recruit YC youth into JC.** Methods included starting recruitment early, such as at YC enrollment, maintaining outreach efforts to potential JC recruits over the course of YC, and engaging families to encourage youth to participate in JC.
- **Partnering with a large YC site and recruiting from multiple YC programs was beneficial for JC recruitment.** The Georgia grantee had a larger applicant pool, because its primary YC partner was large and it also recruited from two other YC programs in the state. Therefore, Georgia could be more selective with who it accepted into JC, while other programs had to enroll most JC applicants to meet their enrollment targets.
- **JC youth resembled YC youth but were less likely to be court-involved.** According to data collected through the background information form, about 36 percent of JC youth were court-involved relative to 41 percent of YC youth overall and 45 percent of YC youth who did not participate in JC. Otherwise, the groups were demographically similar.

A. Recruitment, application, and selection

JC programs were limited to enrolling youth from among the pool of YC graduates. Each aimed to enroll at least 50 youth per cohort, with the goal of at least 50 percent having prior court involvement.

1. Recruitment

To meet the recruitment goals, site staff reported using a mix of recruitment strategies including:

- **Incorporating JC as part of YC marketing**. Staff hoped that the occupational training opportunities provided through JC would increase interest in YC. Thus, they provided information about JC services to prospective YC participants.

- **Frequent JC staff outreach throughout YC**. Once youth were enrolled in YC, staff started JC recruitment early and continued outreach efforts throughout YC. This process included JC staff giving presentations and having targeted conversations with individual YC participants. Consequently, YC reported hearing about JC multiple times from different individuals, including YC staff, JC staff, and JC youth.
- **Engaging families**. JC staff members spoke to YC participants and their families during events such as YC family days or mentor visitation and through letters sent home to parents. Staff described the program and notified parents that their children were being considered for JC in the hopes that parents would encourage their children to enroll. They also aimed to engage and gain support from parents who expressed concern about their children being away from home for a second residential program.
- **Targeted outreach to court-involved youth**. To meet the enrollment target for court-involved youth, JC program staff would identify YC participants with court involvement and encourage them to apply. Grantees also included additional screening questions about court involvement in the JC application material if prior involvement was not detected through the YC intake process.
- **Peer recruitment using current JC youth**. Staff reported that current JC participants were asked to share their experiences in JC with potential JC participants, especially at recruitment events. This strategy was more feasible in Georgia and Michigan where the YC and JC programs were closer geographically. Having JC youth involved in recruitment served the dual purpose of marketing the program by highlighting exemplary participants and providing a leadership opportunity for these youth.
- **Maintaining connection between JC staff and YC post-residential staff.** Although most JC youth enrolled in the cohort immediately following YC graduation, youth were able to enroll in later JC cohorts. JC staff maintained close ties with the YC post-residential staff so that JC could be suggested as an option for youth who were not satisfied with their post-YC activities.

2. Application

All three JC programs developed a process for current and former YC participants to apply. The application process varied by program but could include assessments required by community college partners, recommendations from YC staff, participant interviews, and disciplinary case reviews (see Exhibit III.1).

Exhibit III.1. JC application process steps

3. Selection

JC staff selected applicants based on many considerations, including:

- **Academic proficiency tests**. The college training partners established minimum test scores that varied by occupational track. YC youth interested in JC took placement tests, and the scores affected eligibility for the program.
- **Demonstrated success at YC**. Programs also selected youth who had demonstrated an ability to succeed in the YC environment. Metrics of success included having a recommendation from YC staff, participating in an interview with JC staff, and not having any disciplinary issues while in YC. Exceptions to these requirements were considered on a case-by-case basis.
- **Priority for court-involved youth**. Programs focused on meeting their DOL goal of enrolling 50 percent court-involved youth. JC program staff used information obtained during YC and elicited additional relevant information through JC application questions and interviews.

> "[JC is] the one time in your life when [court-involvement] will not be a bad thing."
>
> —JC staff

- **Constraints in the gender allocation of housing**. In South Carolina and Georgia, the housing facilities and associated supervision requirements placed some constraints on the number of males and females who could be accommodated. In South Carolina, this was rarely a binding constraint, due to the low levels of applicants of each gender. Michigan was less constrained, because JC youth lived in single rooms.

Although all three grantees collected JC application materials, Georgia was the only program that had an applicant pool large enough that it could be selective about who it admitted into the JC program. Georgia's YC program graduated twice as many youths as the programs in Michigan or South Carolina. Georgia also admitted youth from two other YC programs in Georgia. In Michigan and South Carolina, the number of interested and eligible YC youth by cohort rarely exceeded the number of JC slots. As a result, they accepted nearly all interested youth meeting a minimum standard for academic proficiency and demonstrated success at YC.

Conversations with staff and youth focus groups pointed to a variety of reasons why YC youth did not participate in JC. Some youth were deemed ineligible based on prior academic performance or disciplinary issues during YC. Others chose not to apply to JC. According to staff members, common reasons YC youth did not apply or enroll in JC included that they had found work; were not interested in the training provided by JC; did not want to remain in a restricted, supervised environment; did not want to spend four to five months in another program; did not like the location of JC; or were going to enroll in the military or college.

B. Challenges in tracking Job ChalleNGe data

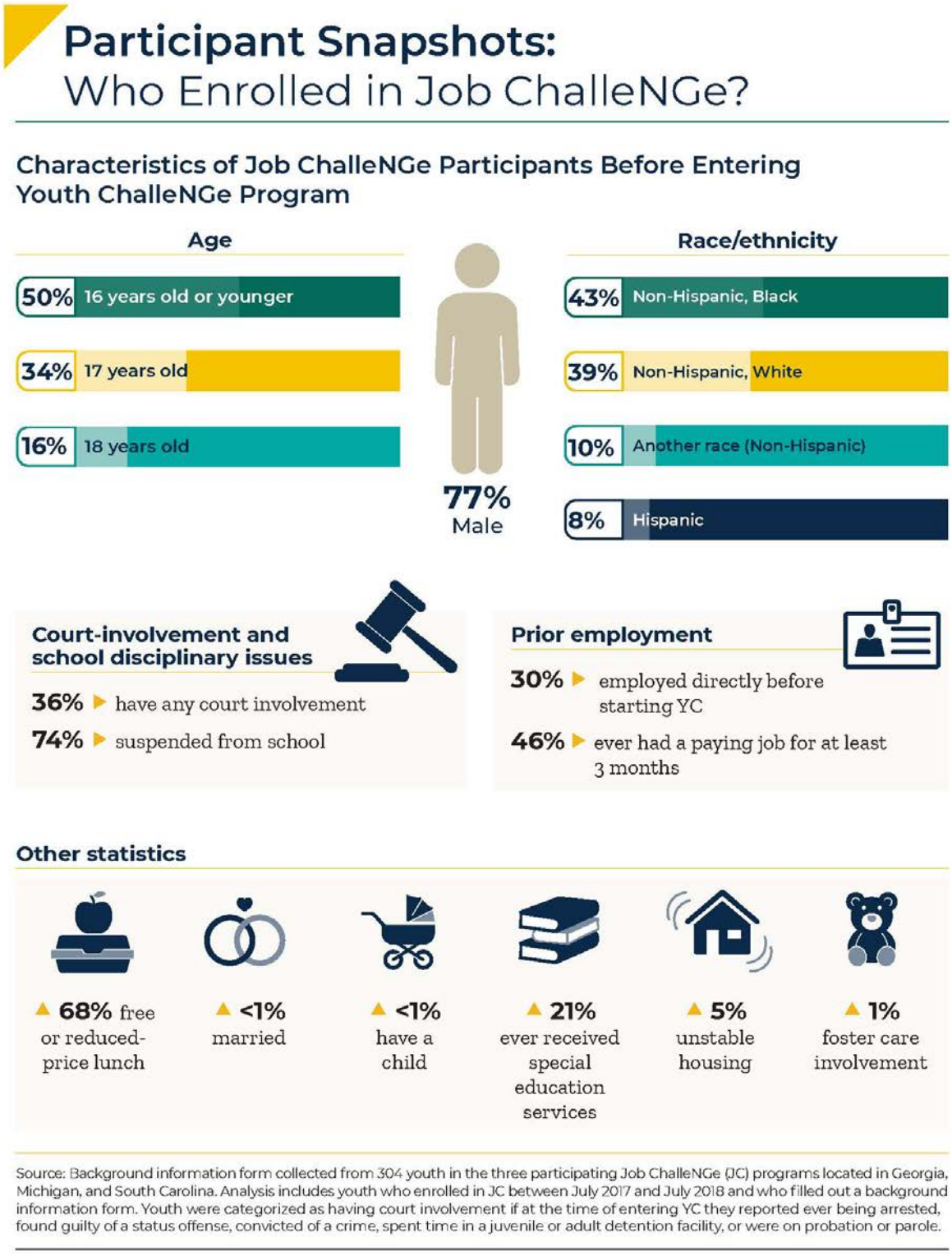
Unlike YC programs, which were required to use the National Cadet Tracking System, JC had no unified system for tracking participant characteristics, the services which they received through JC, and participant post-program outcomes. This resulted in each JC site maintaining its own records, which varied substantially in format and comprehensiveness. Michigan used a system of data collection adapted from the National Guard Cadet Tracking system to add some JC-specific fields. Although this system included data on participant characteristics, the fields YC collected did not directly match the services and nature of the JC program. Both Georgia and South Carolina collected only limited information on JC participants. Georgia maintained a list of all cadets, with withdrawal dates and whether youth enrolled in occupational training courses. South Carolina did not have consistent data collection across cohorts and collected only the information for operating the JC program, such as youth rosters and occupational training program preferences. All three JC programs maintained their data collection independently and did not work in cooperation with YC programs to ensure that data could be linked between YC and JC. As a result of these challenges, program data could not be used to assess participant experiences.

A stronger, more unified data system, that was uniform across JC grantees and linked data to YC data systems would have benefited the evaluation. YC staff members at each site reported difficulty managing and understanding the data collected for the JC program. JC staff also reported receiving little guidance on how to collect data or best practices for maintaining data and reporting outcomes. Staff further reported having limited capacity for data collection and hence they prioritized other activities, such as working with youth, over data tracking.

C. Snapshot of Job ChalleNGe participants

Based on the recruitment and enrollment practices outlined above, JC programs enrolled a group of participants that, in many ways, resembled the broader population of YC. For a snapshot of the characteristics of JC participants cohorts, Exhibit III.2.

Exhibit III.2. JC participant snapshot



Source: Background information form collected from 304 youth in the three participating Job ChalleNGe (JC) programs located in Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina. Analysis includes youth who enrolled in JC between July 2017 and July 2018 and who filled out a background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at the time of entering YC they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or were on probation or parole.

Based on background information forms collected for Cohorts 4–6, 77 percent of the JC participants were male, and half were age 16 when they enrolled in YC. Eight percent were Hispanic, 43 percent were black, and 39 percent were white. Approximately two-thirds of JC participants reported eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch in the two years prior to YC enrollment, and 21 percent had received special education services at some point during their education. Based on the youth self-reports, 36 percent of youth had court-involvement prior to YC enrollment, lower than the target rate of 50 percent.[8]

> "The freedom part gets me—with that, I'll be late [to work]. I like [Job ChalleNGe] putting me on top of my game."
>
> —JC youth

In the focus group discussions, youth reported that they enrolled in JC for the additional opportunities the program provided, including extra time to finish their GEDs, free occupational training, the ability to earn college credits, and free housing. Youth also reported that they expected the program to have a more relaxed disciplinary structure than YC. For example, in one focus group discussion, youth remarked that they anticipated more freedom in JC programs, including no uniforms and greater access to cell phones.

Although there were many similarities between the characteristics of JC youth and the characteristics of YC youth who did not enroll in JC, there were important differences (see Exhibit III.3). JC youth were 5 percentage points less likely to have children. A lower proportion of black youth chose to pursue JC compared to other racial groups, especially relative to white youth. JC youth were also statistically significantly less likely to have received free or reduced-price lunches before enrolling in YC, suggesting that JC youth came from families with less financial hardship.

> "…when I didn't get my GED [at YC]… I was like I have no choice but to go, because I know if I go home, I'm not going to get it. So, I was like I might as well go to this program. That's what really made me come to this program."
>
> —JC youth

[8] According to the performance report data that grantees submitted to DOL, across all grantees and JC cohorts, 44 percent of JC participants were court-involved. The difference between the estimates obtained from the background information forms and the performance report data may be driven by the inclusion of Cohort 1-3 in the performance report data; the data challenges noted above made it impossible to determine the cause of these differences.

Exhibit III.3. Baseline characteristics of YC youth overall and by JC participation (reported in percentages)

Characteristics	Total	YC only	JC	*p*-value[a]
Age				*
16	53	54	50	
17	36	36	34	
18	12	10	16	
Male	80	82	77	*
Race and ethnicity				***
Hispanic	8	8	8	
Non-Hispanic, black	50	53	43	
Non-Hispanic, white	32	29	39	
Non-Hispanic, other race	10	9	10	
Foster care involvement[b]	1	1	1	
Free and reduced-price lunch status[c]	73	75	68	**
Unstable housing[b]	4	4	5	
Ever received special education services	19	19	21	
Married	0	0	0	
Has a child	3	5	0	***
Educational attainment				
Last grade completed in school				
8th grade or below	8	8	6	
9th grade	26	27	23	
10th grade	40	39	42	
11th grade	22	21	24	
12th grade	4	4	5	
High school diploma or GED	2	2	3	
Employment				
Employed directly before YC	28	28	30	
Ever had a paying job for ≥ 3 months	44	43	46	
Sample size	**984**	**680**	**304**	

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form.

[a]We conducted chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the youth in YC only and JC youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[b]Foster care and housing status self-reported at the time of the background information form collection.

[c]Free and reduced-price lunch status self-reported based on the two years prior to background information form collection.

Despite the targeted recruitment efforts of JC staff, JC youth were seven percentage points less likely to have court involvement than youth who participated in YC only. Exhibit III.4 shows consistent differences in self-reported delinquent behavior and justice system involvement across a range of measures. JC youth were significantly less likely to have ever been suspended from school, used marijuana in the previous six months, had a status offense such as truancy or underage use of alcohol, and had a prior detention in a juvenile facility. These observed differences could reflect less interest in the JC program among court-involved youth or could indicate differences in the likelihood of meeting JC eligibility requirements or being selected to be in the program.

Exhibit III.4. Self-reported delinquent behavior and justice system involvement of YC youth at the time of enrollment overall and by JC participation (reported in percentages)

	Total	YC only	JC	*p*-value[a]
Ever suspended	80	82	74	***
Used marijuana in past six months	54	58	44	***
Used another drug in past six months	23	24	20	
Any court involvement	41	43	36	**
Ever arrested or taken into custody	29	30	28	
Any status offense[b]	19	21	15	**
Ever convicted	18	20	15	*
Ever detained in a juvenile facility	17	19	11	***
Ever detained in an adult facility	5	5	6	
On probation or parole at YC entrance	14	14	12	
Sample size	**984**	**680**	**304**	

Source: Background information form weighted data

Notes: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]We conducted chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the youth in YC only and JC youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[b]A status offense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

IV. JOB CHALLENGE RESIDENTIAL CULTURE AND PROGRAM STAFF

A distinctive feature of the JC program was its residential nature; youth lived away from home in a structured, quasi-military environment. However, whereas YC operated like a military boot camp, grantees intended for JC to have more relaxed rules and regulations. JC used elements of military staffing and disciplinary approaches but also introduced more freedom, space, and privacy to help prepare youth for independence after the program. This chapter discusses the housing, staffing, and disciplinary environment that defined the JC residential culture and how these approaches evolved over time. The findings in this chapters are based primarily on information shared by JC program staff during interviews, youth focus groups, and data collected on youth through the follow-up survey.

Key Findings

- **The three JC programs used different housing environments, ranging from a military base to a rural retreat center.** Despite these differences, when selecting the location, administrators from all three JC programs considered distances to local college partners and the YC program, as well as the availability, quality, and cost of the residential space.
- **According to JC administrators, the ideal staffing model for JC involved a lower staff-to-youth ratio than in YC but more than was originally anticipated.** All three JC programs used a quasi-military staffing structure to provide support and discipline to youth. However, administrators realized that JC youth required more intensive supervision than they had initially expected, and thus reported that the number of staff members funded by the grant was insufficient to meet needs.
- **The JC disciplinary approach evolved from one of structured independence to earned freedom.** Although all three JC programs initially gave youth significantly more freedom than they had in YC, staff determined that many youth did not yet have the self-discipline to meet their program goals. As such, administrators decided to tighten the disciplinary model, though it remained more relaxed than in YC.

A. Job ChalleNGe housing

The three JC programs used three unique housing models with different types of facilities, environments, and proximity to their associated YC partners (Exhibit IV.1). Although the three JC programs took different approaches to housing, Georgia and Michigan shared a similar model. Both were located on military facilities near their YC partner programs (Georgia's YC and JC programs were co-located and the Michigan YC program was a short drive away from JC). The close proximity to YC meant that these JC programs could leverage base resources, such as dining halls, gyms, and outdoor recreational activities. Meanwhile, administrators in South Carolina located JC near its technical college partner but this was more than an hour away from YC. Although this location had some advantages, including that it was at a retreat center with a non-military environment and it was conveniently located near the partner college,

program staff reported that the distance from the YC partner's location created logistical challenges.

Exhibit IV.1. JC residential locations by program

		Fort Stewart, Georgia	Fort Custer, Michigan	Aiken, South Carolina
	Type of facility	Army base	National Guard training facility	Retreat center run by Clemson University
	Proximity to YC	Co-located with YC	YC a few miles away	YC about 70 miles away
	Overall atmosphere	Base-like	Base-like	Quiet and rural
	Type of dorm	Barracks with slightly more privacy than YC	Dorm-like accommodations in the base hotel	Cabins with bunks
	Access to other facilities	Ability to use military resources like gym and dining hall, some shared space with military personnel	Ability to use facility resources, some shared space with military personnel	Ability to use retreat center resources, such as the lake and a zip line

Administrators reported considering the following four factors when selecting a JC location:

- **Proximity to program partners.** JC needed to be located close to its partners, especially the community or technical college where youth took classes, because youth spent a great deal of time there. While administrators tried to locate colleges and residential locations near one another, youth from all three programs had to be transported (by van) from their residential site to their classes. This added unavoidable costs and logistical concerns.
- **Proximity to YC.** Although JC youth did not regularly engage with the YC program, staff from both YC and JC programs coordinated around staffing and service delivery, and JC programs leveraged YC staff members when possible. The substantial distance between JC and YC in South Carolina made this type of coordination more challenging. For example, the JC program was less able to use YC staff to fill in for JC staff when necessary. South Carolina JC staff also noted that some parents did not allow their children to apply to JC given difficulties obtaining transportation to its rural location.

- **Type of space.** Housing varied across JC programs. Georgia's JC program housed participants in barracks similar to YC housing (though slightly more private). In contrast, South Carolina's JC youth were housed in cabins, and Michigan's JC program housed participants in an on-base hotel for out-of-town guests. Although plain and dorm-like, Michigan's accommodations had more amenities than most barracks housing.
- **Cost.** All three grantees struggled with the high cost of running a residential program. Locating the JC program near the YC program led to cost savings for Michigan and Georgia, because they were able to use YC facilities and resources. For example, JC grantees had access to more affordable facility leases and to accommodations such as military gym facilities. Nevertheless, administrators at all three programs noted that feeding JC participants was expensive. For a variety of logistical reasons, JC cadets did not eat the same food as YC participants, and their eating arrangements generally cost more than in YC, including in Georgia where YC and JC were collocated. At the Georgia JC location, for example, JC youth had to be bussed to a cafeteria on the base, where food was more expensive than what YC youth ate. Similarly, in Michigan, JC youth were fed through the hotel where students lived, which was more costly than feeding YC youth.

Regardless of the challenges these location-based factors presented to administrators, youth in focus groups noted that JC housing was clearly preferred to YC housing. They indicated that JC housing was more spacious, had more privacy, included more access to outdoor activities, and provided more opportunities for interaction with nonparticipants. They also indicated that the food was better. Even in Georgia, where JC was located on the same base as YC, JC youth still had more space and amenities in recognition of their status as YC graduates. As one youth explained, "You go from sharing a room with 40 people [in YC], to your own room and sharing a bathroom [in JC]."

B. Staffing Job ChalleNGe to meet participants' needs

JC staff members implemented and managed the program and provided support and discipline for the youth. JC staff were not responsible for delivering occupational training, because it was provided by programs' community and technical college partners. Findings regarding staffing are:

- **All three JC programs had well-defined staffing structures with clear roles for each job.** At the highest level, some staff members were responsible for designing and monitoring JC, while other staff members worked directly with youth to ensure their safety and success. Each JC program had a senior administrator who oversaw both YC and JC, a JC-specific project coordinator for day-to-day management, and a small number of residential advisors. JC programs also had other unique staff roles, such as a lead counselor to provide additional oversight for the staff and a JC-specific academic counselor. Overall, the JC programs had fewer dedicated staff members than did their YC partners. YC staff typically included these same roles with larger numbers of staff, along with recruiters, kitchen staff, IT staff, and

others in support roles. JC programs had to forgo providing these additional support services unless they were able to find ways to leverage the YC support staff to serve JC participants.

- **Faculty and administrators at partner community colleges played a key role in the JC program.** Because JC youth spent substantial portions of their day attending occupational skills training at a community or technical college, instructors at these institutions were key to training and disciplining youth. Over the course of the JC grant, Georgia and South Carolina switched from using adjuncts to full-time faculty when they realized that the classroom management and instructional style of full-time faculty better supported youth learning. Aiken Technical College in South Carolina also hired a part-time administrator to serve as a JC liaison. This administrator attempted to ensure that students' needs were being met, handling functions like class scheduling and communication between JC and college staff. Because college instructors were not always familiar with JC and youths' education backgrounds, JC staff members recommended orienting them with JC before the start of the semester.

Implementation tip: Train and leverage YC staff

All three sites found it helpful to leverage YC staff members to provide sufficient levels of oversight and support. This process involved hiring staff who had experience working with the youth at YC and leveraging existing YC staff members. For example, Michigan used YC staff as backup for JC staff on their days off. This approach was more feasible in Georgia and Michigan, because those JC residential environments were near their YC partner.

However, there were also challenges in sharing staff across YC and JC. As both youth focus groups and staff interviews indicated, substitute YC staff members were not always aware of the different disciplinary policies for JC and other differences in the way JC operated. Additional training for YC staff on the disciplinary rules and culture of JC would have helped to address this challenge.

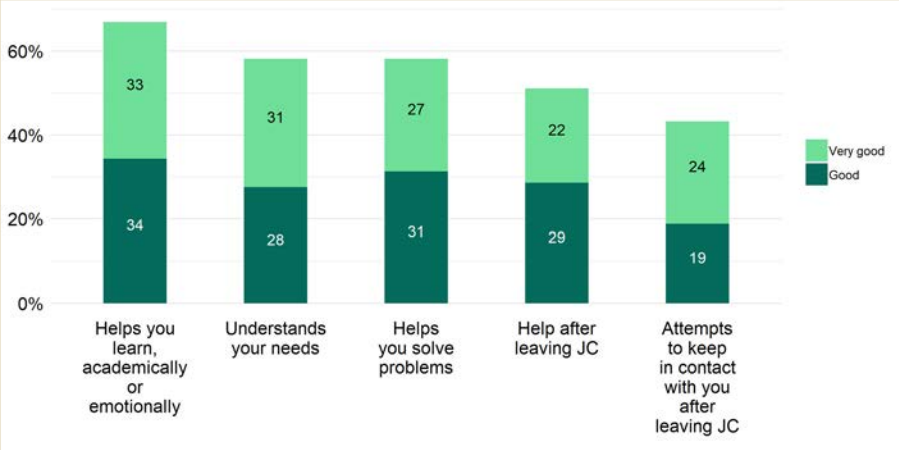
- **JC administrators needed more staff than expected to implement JC.** Administrators from all three JC programs either hired or reported wanting to hire additional JC staff. Although JC administrators initially expected that JC youth would require substantially lower levels of supervision than those in YC, over time, they decided that youth needed more supervision and support. Staff felt that, after youth had gotten used to the highly structured environment of YC, they did not yet have the self-discipline needed to conduct themselves appropriately on their own. For example, they indicated that youth needed to be engaged in supervised activities when not in class. Administrators from all three programs stressed that JC funding was insufficient to provide the level of staffing they eventually believed was necessary. Staff described that this factor sometimes limited their ability to provide one-on-one counseling or to break youth into smaller groups for study sessions or outdoor activities. To compensate, JC program administrators leveraged YC staff members when possible. JC

administrators also explained that JC staff members would play multiple roles, such as providing both counseling and conducting IT updates, to cover all program needs.

- **Generally, youth reported feeling that JC staff members were helpful and that they could talk to staff about any concerns**. In focus groups, youth expressed their gratitude for JC staff, especially the resident advisors. One participant from Georgia described them as there to protect and guide them: "Some people break down and need guidance, and they help."

Exhibit IV.2. Youth perspectives: Quality of staff help

JC participants generally had positive opinions of staff, especially for help provided during the program. They thought, however, that staff were less helpful after they left the program. Most youth indicated that JC staff understood their needs, helped them learn, and helped them solve problems. Lower percentages of participants thought that the staff were good or very good at keeping in touch with them or providing help after the participants left JC.



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.
Notes: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who filled out the follow-up survey. Youth were asked to rate the quality of staff's help on a four-point scale (1 = poor, 2 = okay, 3 = good, 4 = very good).

76 percent of youth reported that they believed at least one staff member really cared about them and they could talk to this staff member about personal things

C. An evolving approach to discipline

Like YC, JC adopted aspects of a military-style discipline structure and upheld a series of rules governing many components of program life, such as dress, study time, cell phone use, and contact with the outside world. However, staff members also recognized that it was important to provide youth with more freedom than they had in YC. As mentioned earlier, JC staff believed that JC was meant to help prepare youth to make healthy choices after leaving the residential program environment and entering school or work.

1. Initial tone of "structured independence"

In the early round of site visits, program staff described their attempt to create a disciplinary structure that was strict yet gave youth flexibility to make decisions on their own. One JC administrator described this approach as "structured independence," with an atmosphere that was more academic than militaristic. Another JC administrator elaborated on this approach, explaining that the goal was to give youth, "the opportunity…to fail or succeed through their own choice, even if we guide them." Although youth still had boundaries and oversight, they had more freedom than they did in YC. For example, youth in all three JC programs could have cell phones and leave on weekends to visit their families. In the Michigan JC program, youth did not have to wear uniforms, and in the other two programs, they wore uniforms only at certain times. Infractions were generally punishable by having privileges taken away (for example, not being able to leave on the weekend).

Implementation tip: Create a written manual or handbook for program rules and disciplinary procedures

Some JC youth complained during focus groups discussions that program rules changed over time or were implemented inconsistently. At times, YC staff, who lacked familiarity with JC rules, provided temporary help in JC programs. Written discipline manuals (which all JC programs eventually created) could improve clarity for both youth and staff members, but their content must be followed and kept up to date.

2. Move toward increased discipline or "earned freedom"

Community and technical college discipline

Because youth spent significant amounts of time at partner community and technical college campuses, these sites also needed disciplinary structures. For the most part, youth were subject to regular college rules and disciplinary procedures, such as for the timely submission of assignments. Individual instructors could choose to discipline youth or refer offenses to JC. Staff or resident advisors also provided additional support as needed. In the South Carolina JC program, for example, staff typically waited outside the classroom door to deal with classroom disruptions as needed.

Over time, staff members across all three JC programs increased the level of oversight and rules. They felt that their early approach of structured independence was challenging for youth, who were perceived to not yet have the self-discipline or maturity needed to succeed in their college-level classes without more rules and support. One staff member explained that youth still needed guidance: "It was really premature on our part to think them ready to be college students." Another said that, initially, they had wanted to implement a culture of "if you want to be treated like an adult, act like an adult." JC administrators described moving to a model that one administrator referred to as "earned freedom." Youth had to demonstrate their readiness for

privileges. For example, administrators from Georgia and South Carolina decided to allow cell phones only for youth without disciplinary issues after several weeks, and even then, cell phone use at all programs was eventually limited to certain times. Michigan JC added a two-week acclimation period with stricter rules to help youth get used to life in JC. The South Carolina JC program also added more staff for increased supervision and to enforce additional rules. Nevertheless, despite the additional supervision and structure, the disciplinary environment was still less strict than in YC.

Youth perspectives: On discipline

Overall, youth found the JC discipline structure to be less severe and more supportive than what they had experienced in YC. One Georgia youth explained:

> ***"JC is more like 'we're here to guide you in the right direction.' YC is more 'put our foot in your back and make you go the right direction.'"*** —Georgia participant

However, despite appreciating this relative leniency, youth also complained either that staff were too inflexible in the way they conducted discipline, or conversely, punishments seemed to be given inconsistently, especially compared with YC. Youth were especially concerned about cell phone policies and how they had changed over time. A focus group participant explained that he and his peers were very motivated to follow the rules so that they would earn cell phone privileges, and then were especially upset when those privileges were revoked temporarily due to someone else's behavior.

3. Infractions and punishments

JC staff members reported that although some youth committed infractions during program participation, most were not very serious. Respondents highlighted some of the most common infractions, including uniform violations, cell phones use during times when they were not allowed, and challenging authority. More serious infractions included fighting, positive drug tests, trespassing to other parts of the base, and smoking.

As described above, punishments for infractions, especially those that were not serious, generally involved taking away privileges or failing to earn them in the first place. Staff members said that they also tried to relate discipline to the work world. For example, a staff member said he would ask youth, "What would happen in the real world, if you did this at a job site?" Another JC program brought back a former cadet who had been fired from his job to tell his story. More serious infractions were brought to the attention of program leadership. Georgia JC also created a youth board that tried infractions like a court; youth who held a leadership position on this board determined appropriate punishments or solutions for their peers.

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V. JOB CHALLENGE PROGRAM SERVICES

With the goal of improving youth employment outcomes, JC grantees were required to implement activities and services in four areas: (1) occupational skills training; (2) individualized career counseling and academic counseling; (3) work-based learning and exposure to the work world; and (4) leadership development activities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors. Service delivery in JC focused on the implementation of an intensive occupational skills training program. Beyond the required services, grantees also offered access to education services, including secondary education services for youth who had not completed their credential during YC and general postsecondary courses for those who qualified.

In this chapter, we discuss the services provided through JC and JC program completion. These findings are drawn from several data sources including site visits, the follow-up survey, and grantee performance reports. The chapter also includes call-out boxes containing youth perspectives about the quality of specific services and of the JC program overall.

Key Findings

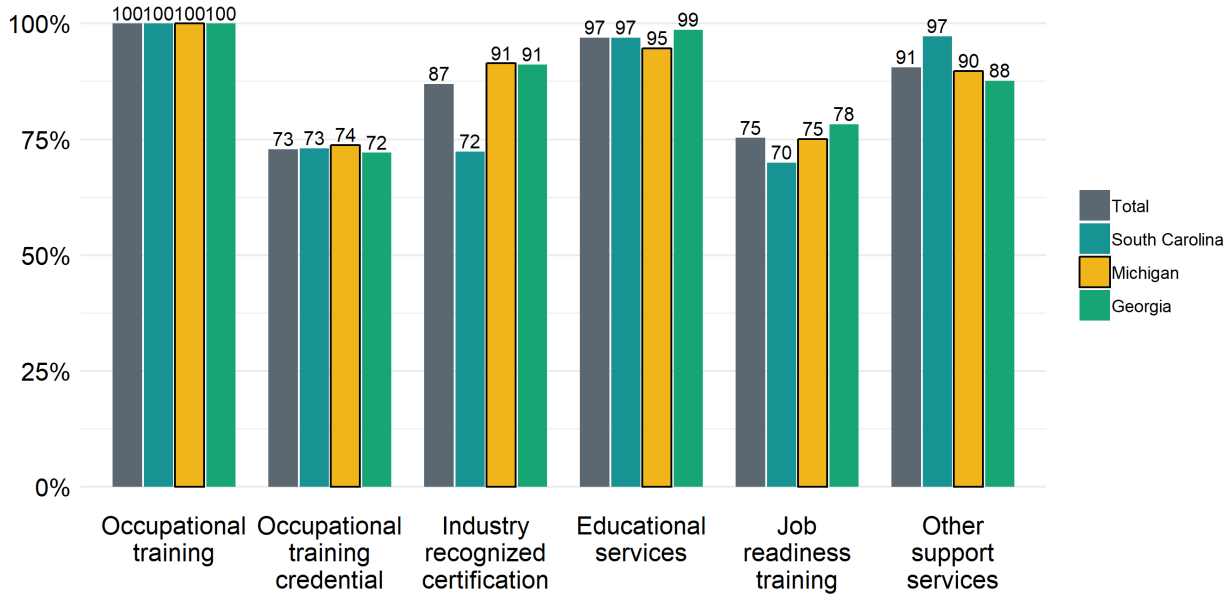
- **Job ChalleNGe provided access to intensive occupational training and supplementary education.** JC programs enrolled youth in community colleges where they took general education courses and participated in certificate-based vocational training programs. Youth who lacked a high school diploma or GED also participated in secondary education services. All youth received some education service or training.
- **Partnerships with community colleges were key to providing occupational training programs.** JC programs formed partnerships with community colleges to provide occupational training and other related program services. All participants received some occupational training, and 87 percent received an industry-recognized certification.
- **Court- and non-court-involved youth received largely the same services.** JC staff members did not differentiate the services they provided to youth based on whether the youth were court-involved. The only exception was that staff steered some youth with criminal backgrounds away from occupational training in fields in which it might be difficult for people with criminal records to obtain employment.

A. Overview of Job ChalleNGe services

The overarching goal of the JC program was to prepare youth for future employment by providing a comprehensive set of training and support services. Youth in JC reported high levels of participation in all types of services, as shown in Exhibit V.1. All of the youth surveyed reported receipt of occupational training. Most youth also received a range of other services and accreditations, including occupational training credentials (73 percent), industry-recognized certifications (87 percent), education services (97 percent), job-readiness services (75 percent), and other support services (91 percent). The rates of receipt of overall services and accreditations were very similar across sites, despite that the details of service delivery varied. Although our

data on service receipt is drawn from the follow-up survey that we conducted with the final three cohorts of JC, information collected during site visits suggests that service delivery was consistent across the cohorts.

Exhibit V.1. JC services and credentialing (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data. N = 150.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

For the most part, there was no distinction in service provision between court-involved and non-court-involved youth. Staff did not consider court involvement in deciding what services youth would be offered, and in many cases, they did not even know which youth were court-involved. One exception to this finding was assignment to occupational training programs. Staff expressed concern that a criminal record—at least for certain types of offenses—could limit the opportunities for cadets in certain fields, primarily health care. As such, academic and career counseling staff members generally encouraged cadets with criminal backgrounds to pursue training in nonmedical fields.

B. Education and occupational skills training

The primary goal of adding a JC extension to the YC program was to "expand and enhance the [YC] program's job skills component"[9] to put participants on a path to employment. To accomplish this goal, the JC program was structured around vocational training programs designed to equip participants with the skills and credentials needed for employment in a given

[9] U.S. Department of Labor, "Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for National Guard Youth Challenge and Job Challenge Program." Available at https://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/FOA-ETA-15-01.pdf.

field. All three JC programs partnered with community colleges to develop occupational training programs and a general JC curriculum.

JC community college partners

Georgia
Institution: Savannah Technical College
Location: Savannah, Georgia

Michigan
Institution: Kellogg Community College (Regional Manufacturing and Training Center)
Location: Battle Creek, Michigan

South Carolina
Institution: Aiken Technical College
Location: Aiken, South Carolina

Although the programs differed in many ways, they all took similar steps to establish these partnerships and the JC occupational training programs.

- **JC programs collaborated with community college partners to decide on the content and structure of college courses for JC participants.** These collaborations included determining which occupational skills training courses to offer. Programs based these decisions on local labor market demand and the interests and academic skills of the youth. JC youth typically enrolled in dedicated sections of the courses, without other college students. Staff and college partners modified the length, structure, and timing of the courses to better fit within the JC program time frame. One JC staff member noted how the program's college partner had really taken ownership of the program and, when the program handed over its youth to college faculty and staff members, it knew that those staff viewed the youth as their students. This sentiment was echoed across the other two programs, with one staff member noting how the program's college partner had "bent over backward" to support and accommodate JC.

Secondary education services

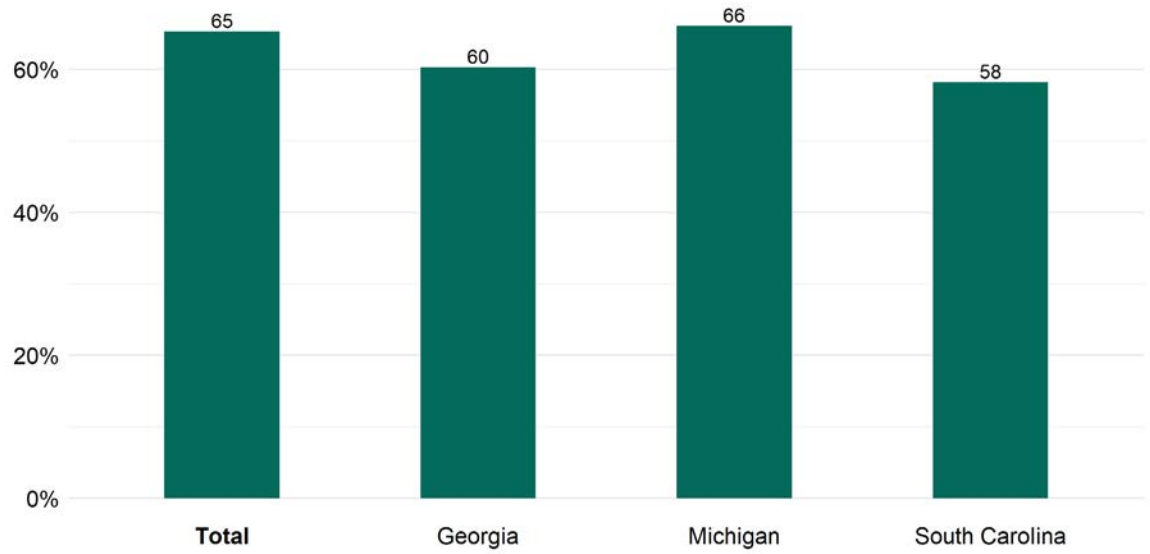
Although the JC program was designed to give youth postsecondary education and training, 60 percent of cadets had not completed their secondary education (a diploma or high school equivalency certificate) by the start of JC. JC programs therefore needed to offer secondary education services to participants. Approximately, 54 percent of surveyed JC youth reported taking courses in GED preparation or to prepare for a high school diploma.

- **Youth enrolled as college students at community college partners**. As college students, youth were able to take general education courses, such as math or English courses, as well as college courses focused on things like study skills or how to navigate the college environment. As part of JC, youth had full access to campus facilities and events; learned to interact with students, instructors, and faculty; and became aware of and utilized college services, such as tutoring and career counseling. Across the three sites, 65 percent of participants reported taking courses for college credit while at JC, as shown in Exhibit V.2. According to JC staff members, by the time some youth completed JC, not only had they earned a certificate or

credential, they had also completed about one-third to about one-half of the credits needed for an associate degree.[10]

- **Programs were able to leverage financial resources through partner community colleges**. A key benefit to partnerships with the community and technical colleges was support in helping to pay for training. To cover the cost of providing education, JC programs leveraged financial aid available to partner community college students.[11] All three JC programs were also able to use Pell grants and partner with college staff who guided both youth and JC staff members through the financial aid application process.
- **JC staff worked with community college partners to provide academic and career counseling.** Counseling was designed to help JC participants plan their long-term education and career trajectories. Counselors used sessions with youth to determine their education, training, and supportive service needs and took advantage of the resources and experiences of college staff in providing similar services to college students. Staff felt that this support was particularly important for participants interested in pursuing additional education following JC. Across the three sites, 32 percent of participants reported receiving academic counseling, such as help identifying and applying to education or training options after JC. We describe career counseling in more detail in the section below on employment services.

Exhibit V.2. JC participants taking courses for college credit (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data. N = 150.
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

[10] Because the data NSC collected for this project does not include information on credits received or number of credits required for a degree, we are unable to quantify the number of participants who made substantial progress toward an associate degree.

[11] In Georgia, JC participants were eligible for the state's Hope Grants. In Michigan, the JC program was able to leverage an existing Trade Adjustment Assistant Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) grant. In South Carolina, the JC program was able to use a state lottery tuition assistance fund.

Benefits and drawbacks of offering JC-only occupational training programs

Benefits: During site visits, program and college partner staff members noted important advantages of having classes that consisted only of JC students

- **Easier to manage discipline.** These dedicated sections made it easier for program staff to be present and easily intervene to correct discipline issues, without disrupting the education experience of non-JC students.
- **Better able to tailor instruction.** Staff thought the JC-only courses were better able to calibrate the pace of instruction based on the needs of JC students. JC youth were often younger than other college students and had somewhat different education backgrounds than non-JC students. One course instructor noted that he adjusted the pace of JC-only classes and often built in frequent breaks so that JC cadets could get acclimated to the college environment.

Possible drawbacks: At least one JC participant expressed that being in JC-only courses led youth to feel set apart from other college students and therefore like they were not getting the full college experience.

1. Occupational services and credentials

Occupational skills training was a central component of the JC program. Staff matched youth to occupational services based on youth's interests, course availability (i.e., not all courses were offered during each cohort), and the fit based on youth aptitude and background experience as assessed in career and academic counseling services. As highlighted above, 100 percent of surveyed youth reported receiving some form of occupational skills training. Exhibit V.3 shows the occupational training programs taken by JC participants by site. The most popular occupational training programs were nurse's aide/certified nursing assistant (CNA) and welding, although enrollment varied by site. For example, only 7 percent of Michigan participants received nurse's aide/CNA training relative to 30 percent in Georgia and 31 percent in South Carolina. This variation was partially due to differences in programs offered by site and cohort.

Tower technicians

Cadets in South Carolina's Aiken Technical College tower technician program earned a certificate in basic tower and wireless installation and maintenance. As part of this training program, youth learned technical and safety aspects of the job and they participated in a weekly, 80–100-foot tower climb at an active tower for a television station in South Carolina.

Exhibit V.3. Occupational training services in which JC participants enrolled (reported in percentages)

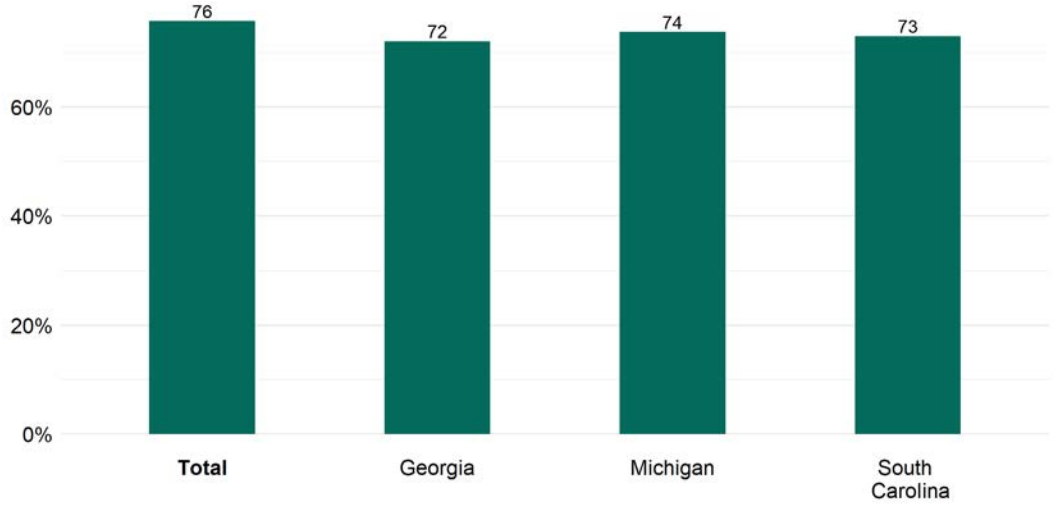
Services received	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Nurse's aide or certified nurse assistant	23	30	7	31
Welding	22	22	22	21
Computer networks	12	0	14	30
Maintenance (including electrical maintenance and repair, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and appliance repair)	8	12	7	0
Automotive or electronic technician	6	14	0	0
Warehousing and distribution (including Certified Logistics Associate and Certified Logistics Technician)	5	9	1	2
Culinary or food production worker	4	8	0	0
Robotics	4	0	12	0
Electrical systems	3	0	9	0
Operations and production	3	0	1	12
Heavy equipment operation	3	1	9	0
Construction	3	0	8	0
Advanced manufacturing	2	0	2	4
Carpentry	1	0	2	0
Other[a]	3	4	4	0
Sample size	**150**	**54**	**67**	**29**

Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

[a]Other write-in trainings reported by youth included manual machining, phlebotomy, sports medicine, and digital media. Overall, most JC participants completed their job training and earned credentials. Exhibit V.4 shows the share of JC participants who received a credential for completing their job training program. Among all participants who started JC, 76 percent received a credential after the training.

Exhibit V.4. JC youth completing training and receiving certification (reported in percentages)

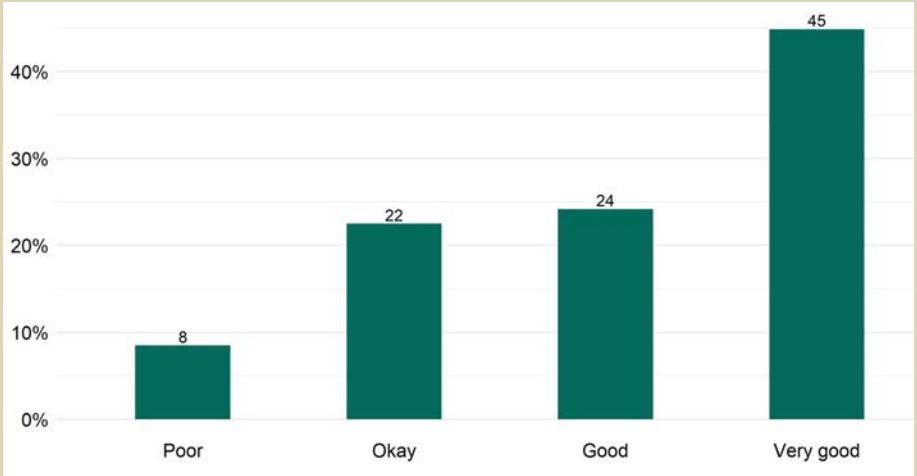


Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data, N = 150.
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey

Noncompletion of job training credentials was largely driven by JC program drop-out. Among participants who did not complete a credential, 75 percent did not finish the program, as shown in Exhibit V.6 . One possibility is that youth who experienced challenges with their job training program dropped out of the JC program entirely. However, only 5 percent of JC dropouts reported they did not like their job training field or classes. Among youth who completed the JC program but did not receive a credential, the most common reason was that they needed to complete additional work, such as more courses or an

Exhibit V.5. Youth perspectives: Quality of job-training programs

Most JC participants surveyed reported that they thought the job-training programs were of high quality.



Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data. N = 132.
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4-6 who completed the follow-up survey.

assessment. Ten percent of participants also said there was no credential available for the industry in which they wanted to work.

Exhibit V.6. Reasons for youth not receiving a credential (reported in percentages)

Reason for not receiving a credential	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
I left before I completed the program	75	83	69	66
Needed to retake one or more courses I took at JC to get credential	13	17	9	11
JC did not offer a credential program for the industry I wanted to work in	10	17	5	0
Needed to take a test or assessment in addition to coursework completed at JC to get credential	8	4	3	23
More courses needed for credential than available through the JC program	5	0	16	0
Needed additional work experience to get credential	1	0	4	0
Sample size	**36**	**13**	**16**	**7**

Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey and reported that they did not complete a credential.

In addition to the occupational training programs, youth also worked toward other industry-recognized certifications. For example, more than three-quarters of participants received Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA-10) certifications, as shown in Exhibit V.7. Other common certifications included forklift certification; cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification; and WorkKeys, a career readiness certification.[12] Certifications were designed to provide participants with a way to demonstrate to employers the job skills they learned and improve the employability of participants following JC.

[12] WorkKeys assessments are used by many workforce development system providers across the country to measure participants' hard and soft skills and to provide employers with a standardized measure of these skills, demonstrated through various certificate tiers.

Exhibit V.7. Other credentials youth received through JC (reported in percentages)

Services received	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
OSHA-10 (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)	76	82	85	54
Forklift	37	49	14	46
Cardiopulmonary resuscitation	32	39	12	50
WorkKeys[a]	21	5	23	48
Other certification program	3	0	6	6
None	13	9	9	28
Sample size	**150**	**54**	**67**	**29**

Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

[a]Details of the WorkKeys career readiness certification can be found at http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workkeys-for-employers/assessments.html.

C. Employment services

All three JC programs worked to determine the right mix of education, training, and supportive services needed to help each participant achieve his or her long-term education and career goals Employment services were clearly a central service component in which programs expected youth to participate (Exhibit V.8). JC programs offered participants a range of services to expose them to career options and provide them with the tools needed to find jobs. They also offered workplace experiences designed to give participants a more realistic picture of what employment would look like in different industries. Across the three sites, 43 percent of participants were exposed to work environments through field trips, job-shadowing opportunities, or internship experience (not presented in exhibit). The following section details the employment services that JC offered.

Career counseling and job search assistance. Career counseling, offered formally through community college partners, was designed to help JC participants identify and achieve employment goals. JC staff also helped JC participants with employment support services such as job search assistance. Across the three sites, nearly half of surveyed participants reported receiving some job search assistance (46 percent), and about one-third (32 percent) reported receiving formal career counseling. Twenty-one percent of participants received help applying to another vocational training program following JC.

Field trips to local employers and guest speakers. All three JC sites provided participants with opportunities to visit workplaces through field trips to local employers, such as local factories or kitchens. For example, in Georgia staff took youth on a trip to the Westin Hotel culinary group, where the head chef demonstrated pastry-making techniques. Across the three sites, 29 percent

of youth reported having attended at least one of these field trips. JC program staff also explained in interviews how they sometimes brought in guest speakers to meet with youth. For example, a South Carolina staff member invited a human resources representative from a local company to talk about the hiring process and industry representatives to help teach about different types of career opportunities.

Exhibit V.8. Employment services received by JC participants (reported in percentages)

Services received	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Any employment service	75	78	75	70
Help searching for a job, including help filling out an application, writing a resume, or going on an interview	46	47	46	43
Career counseling	32	44	23	24
Help applying to a vocational training program to attend after JC, including help with an application or interview	21	20	21	24
Field trips to business places/work environments	29	29	36	19
Job-shadowing opportunities	23	44	7	4
Internship experience	13	21	2	12
None	25	22	25	30
Sample size	**150**	**54**	**67**	**29**

Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

Job shadowing. Across the three sites, 23 percent of youth reported participating in job shadowing. This activity was a larger component of the Georgia JC program, with 44 percent of participants in job shadowing, relative to Michigan and South Carolina, with 7 and 4 percent participation, respectively. There was also variation in access to job shadowing by occupational training program. Job shadowing was most common in medical fields, such as CNA training, first-responder training, or patient care coordinator training. Staff reported that these experiences also occasionally led to additional volunteer or even paid positions.

Internships and part-time work. Youth sometimes had opportunities to obtain direct

Challenges in offering work experiences

It was not always easy for JC programs or college partners to provide participants with work experiences, especially paid employment. JC staff reported that the main obstacle was employer liability concerns. One staff member at a JC program discussed that many of the manufacturing companies near the JC program could not legally hire workers under 18, which limited work opportunities for many youth.

work experience. JC programs sometimes assisted youth in finding part-time work on or near the program's residential location, even if these positions were not directly related to the field of training. These opportunities also varied by program, being most common in Georgia (21 percent), less common in South Carolina (12 percent), and very rare in Michigan (2 percent). They were also common in medical fields. For example, some youth in Georgia and South Carolina obtained work experience through a rotation in a nursing facility. Staff from the Georgia JC program reported partnering with a local workforce system agency to provide paid internships for a small number of participants; these internships were typically in fields outside of the participants' training area, but they did provide income and work experience.

D. Non-academic support services

JC programs were designed based on the theory that a holistic set of support services is needed to promote employment success among youth. Both formal and informal life skills training (e.g. budgeting, independent living, employability), leadership training, and personal support services helped youth build soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace and provided resources to improve well-being. Overall, these opportunities tended to expand on those offered in YC, and provided more opportunities focused on career planning and placement. Non-academic support services were widespread in JC programs, with 91 percent of participants reporting they received at least one service (Exhibit V.9). As with most services in JC, staff members did not distinguish between court-involved and non-court-involved individuals in service delivery.

Exhibit V.9. Non-academic support services received by JC participants (reported in percentages)

Services received	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Any non-academic support service	91	88	90	97
Got help or advice from JC program staff	72	74	76	62
Got help or advice from a mentor	51	50	58	43
Life skills classes or training (including budgeting, banking and other financial skills, independent living, employability class, etc.)	50	49	55	45
Communication or public speaking training	30	33	31	24
Leadership training	48	52	50	38
Leadership experience (for example, experience as a squad leader, platoon guide)	46	54	43	36
Health services	29	37	19	28
Mental health services	18	22	18	12
None	9	12	10	3
Sample size	**150**	**54**	**67**	**29**

Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data.

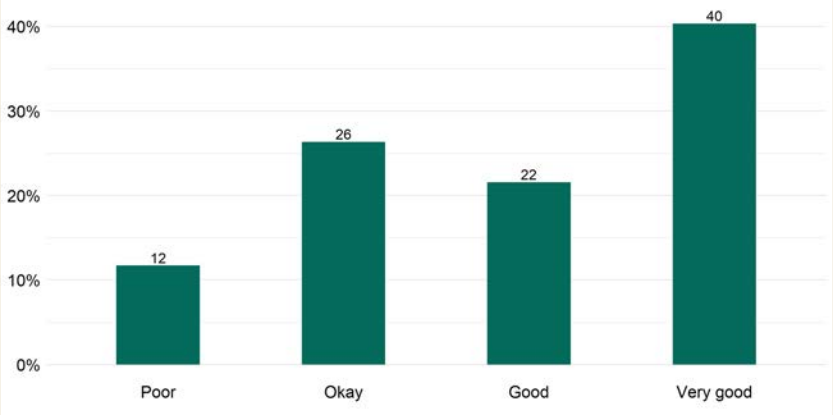
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

Work readiness and life skills coursework. JC programs provided training and education in both hard skills (technical abilities with measurable competency) and soft skills (interpersonal and personality-based skills) needed to find and maintain a job (either civilian or military) or succeed in higher education. All three sites offered communication or public speaking training (30 percent of youth participated) and life skills classes or trainings (50 percent participated). Although the specific elements of the life skills training varied across JC programs, some examples of content included professional skills training, such as professional dress, using a time clock, etc.; information about military careers; harassment and bullying in the workplace; study skills classes; and financial literacy classes. Compared with similar YC services, staff reported that these services were longer, more career-focused, and typically offered as a course generating college credit.

Leadership development. Leadership development occurred through both leadership training and leadership opportunities within the program. Combined, 59 percent of youth received some leadership development service, with 48 percent receiving leadership training, and 46 percent taking on a leadership role. Examples included serving as squad leader during exercise and transitions, serving on a leadership council that planned social events and settled dispute between participants, helping other participants in study hall and tutoring, assisting instructors during classroom training, and representing the program through public speaking and recruitment assistance. Leadership opportunities were considered to be an earned privilege, although sites varied in how they assigned them. Two programs used a military-style concept of rank in which only youth who had achieved high ranks were eligible for leadership positions. Staff also tried to rotate participants through positions so that more participants would have an opportunity to serve in a leadership role.

Exhibit V.10. Youth perspectives: Quality of leadership opportunities

Most JC participants who were surveyed reported that they thought the leadership opportunities were of high quality.



Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data. N = 139.
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

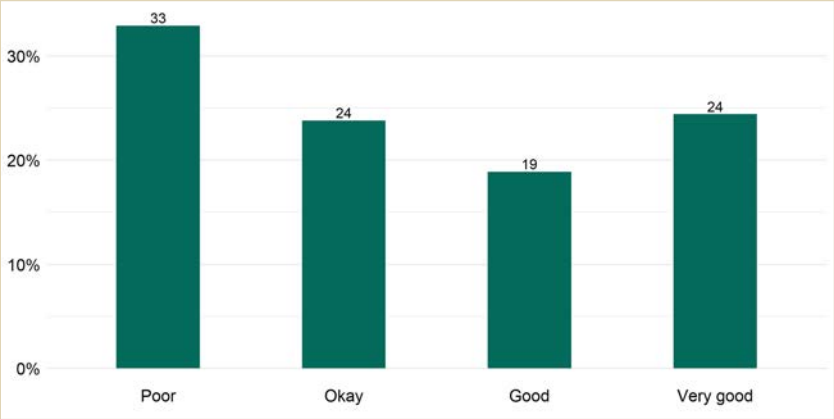
Support services. JC programs also strove to provide youth with the formal and informal support services needed to succeed. While at JC, some participants took advantage of both physical (29 percent) and mental health services (18 percent). Participants also relied on program staff and assigned mentors for guidance during the program. Many participants reported turning to program staff (72 percent) and mentors (51 percent) for advice during the JC program.

E. Post-residential services

JC staff relied heavily on YC staff to monitor whether youth were achieving their post-program goals of being engaged in a productive activity, such as postsecondary education, training, employment, or the military. Because 82 percent of participants went straight from YC to JC, the JC post-program period usually overlapped with the one-year post-residential phase of YC. JC staff typically had far less capacity to follow up with youth in the post-residential phase of JC relative to YC staff, who routinely monitored youth progress in the post-residential phase. Typically, JC program staff members "passed back" youth to their YC counselors after the completion of JC, thus relying on YC staff for the post-residential phase follow-up. JC program staff also indicated in interviews that they typically relied on youth to be proactive in providing updates or used more passive ways to identify youth progress, such as scanning social media.

Exhibit V.11. Youth perspectives: Connection with staff following JC

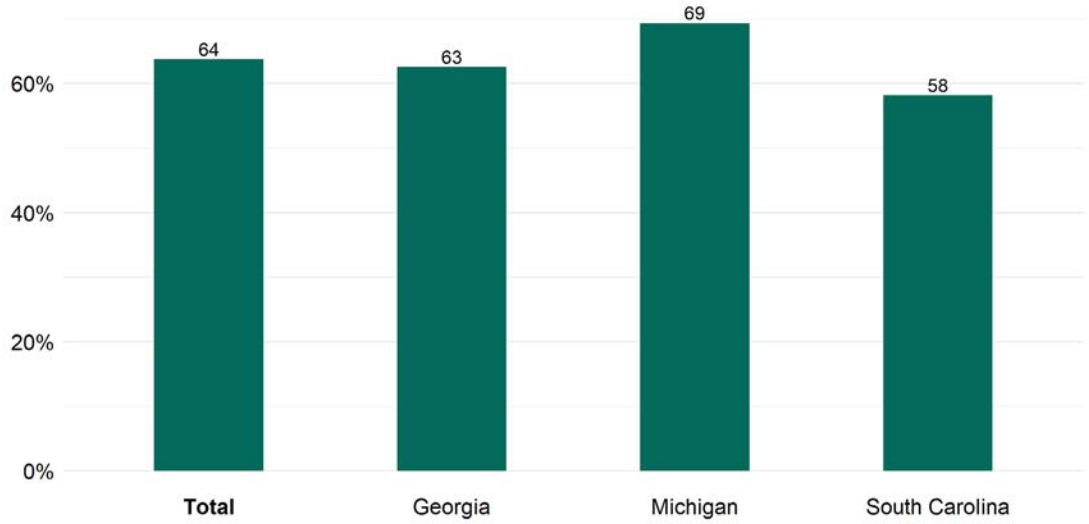
More than half of participants surveyed thought staff attempts to keep in touch after JC were either okay or poor



Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data. N = 150.
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

The relationship between youth and their mentors was designed, however, to endure beyond JC. The mentor relationship formed during YC was intended to last for at least the full-year post-residential period of YC. The mentor, who was chosen as someone with whom the youth had a relationship prior to the YC program, committed to helping youth make the most of the lessons that they learned at YC and JC. Mentors played a limited role in JC, although JC staff did facilitate check-ins and outings with youth and their mentors. Therefore, the post-program relationships with mentors largely mirrored that of YC participants. Approximately two-thirds of youth reported staying in touch with their mentor after JC (Exhibit V.12).

Exhibit V.12. Share of JC youth who reported keeping in touch with their mentors following JC (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey data weighted data. N = 150.

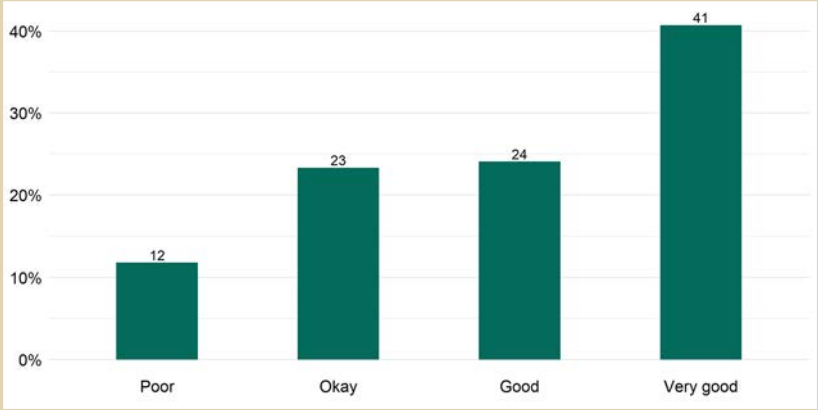
Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey.

F. Job ChalleNGe completion

Overall JC completion rates, as reported in the grantee performance reports submitted to DOL, were high, with 89 percent of youth completing JC in South Carolina and 93 percent in Georgia. The overall JC completion data for Michigan was not available. Completion rates for court-involved youth ranged from 43 percent in South Carolina to 86 percent in Georgia. Completion rates for each program are shown in the program profiles in Appendix A. As described in Appendix B,

Exhibit V.13. Youth perspectives: Overall quality of JC program

Most participants rated the JC program positively, with 41 percent of participants rating it as "very good" and 24 percent rating it as "good."



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data. N = 150.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the follow-up survey. Participants were asked, "How would you rate the quality of your JC program with regards to your overall JC experience?"

staff reported some concerns about the consistency of the data reported in the grantee performance reports. The differences in the completion rates of court-involved and non-court-involved youth also contrasted with the perceptions of grantee staff that court-involved youth had similar rates of attrition to other youth. In fact, staff at two JC programs thought these youth might be more motivated to achieve success in the program than their peers, because they better understood what was at stake if they did not complete the program.

Twenty eight youth who left the JC program completed the survey, providing a glimpse into their reasons for leaving. Although almost a quarter of youth did not complete JC because they were asked to leave, the rest of the youth who left JC did so voluntarily. Some of the most common reasons youth cited for leaving the program included not liking the program overall (28 percent), a family member becoming ill (23 percent), not liking the style of discipline in the program (15 percent), not liking the other youth (13 percent), not liking the staff (12 percent), and being homesick or wanting to return home (9 percent). These responses were consistent with JC staff reports and responses from focus group participants that youth left because they wanted to be with family or friends or felt the environment was too restrictive.

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VI. JOB CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

The primary goal of the Job ChalleNGe program was to improve the outcomes of participants after the JC program through access to education and job training. As previous chapters have highlighted, each component of the program was designed to provide participants with the skills and resources to improve post-program outcomes. In this chapter, we present analyses of the education, employment, and military outcomes of JC participants. We also show the arrests and convictions of participants after leaving JC. Although we are unable to present causal evidence of the impact of JC on these outcomes, for context, we present a comparison of JC participants' outcomes to outcomes for YC participants. The findings in this chapter are based primarily on data from the JC follow-up survey, NSC, and state criminal justice administrative records.

Key Findings

- **Across the three sites, 86 percent of JC participants were involved in a productive activity approximately 14 months after JC and most avoided criminal justice involvement.** This is driven by the fact that 81 percent of JC participants were employed at the time of the survey. Although two-thirds of JC participants enrolled in post-secondary education during their time at JC, only 10 percent were enrolled one year after YC completion. Post-program involvement with the justice system was relatively limited -- sixteen percent of JC participants were arrested, and 7 percent were convicted of a new charge in the time between YC completion and data collection.
- **Court-involved JC participants had similar rates of involvement in a productive activity as non-court-involved participants, but had higher rates of criminal justice involvement following the program.** There was no measurable difference in the post-program employment rates or job characteristics of court-involved participants and non-court-involved participants. Although there was no measurable difference in postsecondary education during the JC period, by one year following YC completion, court-involved participants were less than half as likely to be enrolled than non-court-involved participants. Twenty five percent of court-involved participants were arrested in the period between YC and data collection, relative to only 11 percent of non-court-involved participants.
- **Relative to participants in YC only, JC participants had lower rates of criminal justice involvement and higher rates of enrollment in postsecondary education.** Sixty-seven percent of JC participants were enrolled in school within six months of YC exit, compared to 8 percent of YC-only participants. This difference was not sustained following the JC program period. These findings should not be interpreted as causal estimates of the impact of JC as these two groups had different levels of pre-program justice-involvement and likely had different interest in pursuing postsecondary education.

A. Job ChalleNGe participant outcomes

We begin this chapter by describing the education, employment, and criminal justice post-program outcomes of JC participants. These three domains reflect the primary focuses of the JC program. Although these outcomes do not present causal evidence of the impact of JC, they are informative in illustrating the post-program experiences of participants. In each section, we also describe how the outcomes for court-involved participants compare to the outcomes for non-court-involved participants.

1. Post-secondary education

Partnerships with community colleges were strategically designed not only to provide education services during the JC residential phase, but also to increase participants' access to and familiarity with post-secondary educational institutions. Academic counselors and JC staff also supported youth by helping them identify and apply for additional opportunities for education and training beyond JC. To assess the post-secondary outcomes of JC youth, we analyzed NSC data on YC and JC youths' enrollment in colleges and universities, including the name and type of institution (two-year or four-year), and the degree type (associate, bachelor's etc.).[13]

67 percent of JC participants enrolled in college within 6 months of completing YC, but only 10 percent were enrolled one year after completing YC.

Two-thirds of JC participants were enrolled in post-secondary education within six months of completing YC[14] (Exhibit VI.1). Given that most participants went straight from YC to JC, this finding suggests that many youth attended community colleges as part of the JC program.[15] The share of participants enrolled within six months of YC completion varied among sites, with 49 percent enrolled in Georgia, 77 percent in South Carolina, and 84 percent in Michigan, as shown in Appendix Table E.8. There are a few factors should be considered in interpreting this variation. First, NSC data may not reflect some of the education programs available to JC participants at post-secondary schools. Second, sites may have varied in how non-occupational training courses were offered and which ones counted for college credit. Finally, partner community colleges may have varied in their requirements for enrollment. Given that many JC participants did not have a GED or high school degree at entrance, there may have been restrictions on whether they could get college credit.

Court-involved participants

Court-involved and non-court-involved participants had similar post-secondary enrollment rates within six months of YC completion, but non-court-involved participants were more likely than court-involved participants to continue education or receive a certification. Within six months of YC completion, there was no measurable difference in the enrollment rates for court-involved participants and non-court-involved participants. However, one year following YC, only 5 percent of court-involved participants were enrolled relative to 13 percent of non-court-involved participants. Court-involved youth were also significantly less likely to receive a credential any time following YC with 36 percent of court-involved participants receiving a credential compared to 50 percent of non-court-involved participants.

Despite the high enrollment rates through JC, only a small share of JC youth continued to obtain education following JC. Across sites, only 10 percent of participants were enrolled in post-

[13] The NSC collects information on student enrollment from more than 99 percent of U.S. colleges and universities. For information on the NSC data, see Appendix B.

[14] YC is used as a reference period for JC outcomes to facilitate comparison to YC participants.

[15] Among participants included in this analysis, consenting JC cohorts 4-6 participants who also participated in YC cohorts 4-6, 92 percent of JC participants went straight from YC to JC.

secondary education at the one-year mark following YC completion, and only 8 percent were enrolled at the two-year mark following the completion of YC. Site-level differences persisted

Exhibit VI.1. Post-secondary educational outcomes for JC participants (reported in percentages)

	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
Enrollment in post-secondary education				
Any post-secondary education				
Within six months of YC	67	66	68	
One year following YC	10	5	13	**
Two years following YC[b]	8	4	10	
Enrolled in two-year college				
Within six months of YC	67	66	68	
One year following YC	9	5	12	*
Two years following YC[b]	5	1	8	**
Enrolled in four-year college				
Within six months of YC	0	0	0	
One year following YC	1	0	1	
Two years following YC[b]	2	3	2	
Enrolled in private institution				
Within six months of YC	0	0	0	
One year following YC	0	0	0	
Two years following YC[b]	2	3	1	
Obtained certification[c]				
Within six months of YC	22	14	27	**
Anytime following YC	45	36	50	*
Sample size	**304**	**103**	**194**	

Source: NSC sample weighted data. Data includes educational outcomes through October 2019.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who attended YC Cohorts 4–6. Statistics on enrollment in two-year and four-year colleges include both public and private institutions. Statistics on enrollment in private institutions include both two-year and four-year private institutions. Enrollment statistics within six months are calculated as whether there was any enrollment for a participant in the six months following YC completion. Enrollment statistics at one (two) years following YC are calculated as whether the participant was enrolled in school in the semester in which the one (two) year point in time follow YC completion occurred. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, non-court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Seven sample members were missing information on court involvement.

[a] Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and non-court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

[b] Outcomes calculated two years following YC do not include YC Cohort 6.

[c] Certification data were not available for Michigan participants. Sample is limited to Georgia and South Carolina.

two years following YC, with 11 percent of Michigan JC participants enrolled relative to only 7 and 5 percent in South Carolina and Georgia, respectively (Appendix Table E.8). Nearly all of the JC participants who were enrolled in school one year following the completion of YC were enrolled in a public two-year college.

Following YC, 45 percent of participants in South Carolina and Georgia received a certification reported through NSC by a post-secondary educational institution (data were not available for Michigan[16]). About half of the South Carolina and Georgia participants who received certifications did so within six months of finishing YC, and nearly all of the certifications were obtained within one year of YC completion. It is possible that some of the certifications received more than six months following YC completion were earned through JC participation, given the timing of when youth finish JC and the potential for delays in the granting of certificates. Even considering certifications earned at any time, the share of participants who are indicated by NSC data to have earned a certification is substantially lower than the self-reported certification rates indicated in the follow-up survey, in which 73 percent of participants report earning an occupational training credential. One of the many possible explanations for this could be that not all occupational certifications were granted by the colleges or considered formal certifications. It is also worth noting that even if youth were working toward a two-year or four-year degree, few would have obtained it by the end of data collection.

Consistent with enrollment patterns by site, a higher share of participants in South Carolina received a certification than participants in Georgia. Certification data is not available for Michigan participants, but because community college enrollment was the highest in that program, we would expect the overall certification number to increase if participants from Michigan were included.

Some youth also went on to complete additional education other than enrollment in a college or university, and therefore, their enrollment would not be captured by the NSC data. Twenty eight percent of youth reported being enrolled in any courses at the time of the follow-up survey, which was collected between 16 and 23 months after youth started JC (Exhibit VI.2). This percentage is more than three times the number of JC participants observed in the NSC data as enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution two years after YC. Examples of education captured by the survey in settings other than post-secondary institutions included GED courses, additional professional training, and work-based training.

[16] There were no degrees indicated in the NSC data provided for Michigan participants. This finding is inferred to be because the Michigan JC site community college partner did not submit degrees earned through JC to NSC.

Exhibit VI.2. Enrollment in any classes following JC (reported in percentages)

	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
Enrollment in any courses	28	22	30	
Sample size	**150**	**53**	**95**	

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, non-court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. Participants were asked, "Are you taking any courses or classes for academic or work-related reasons?"

[a] Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

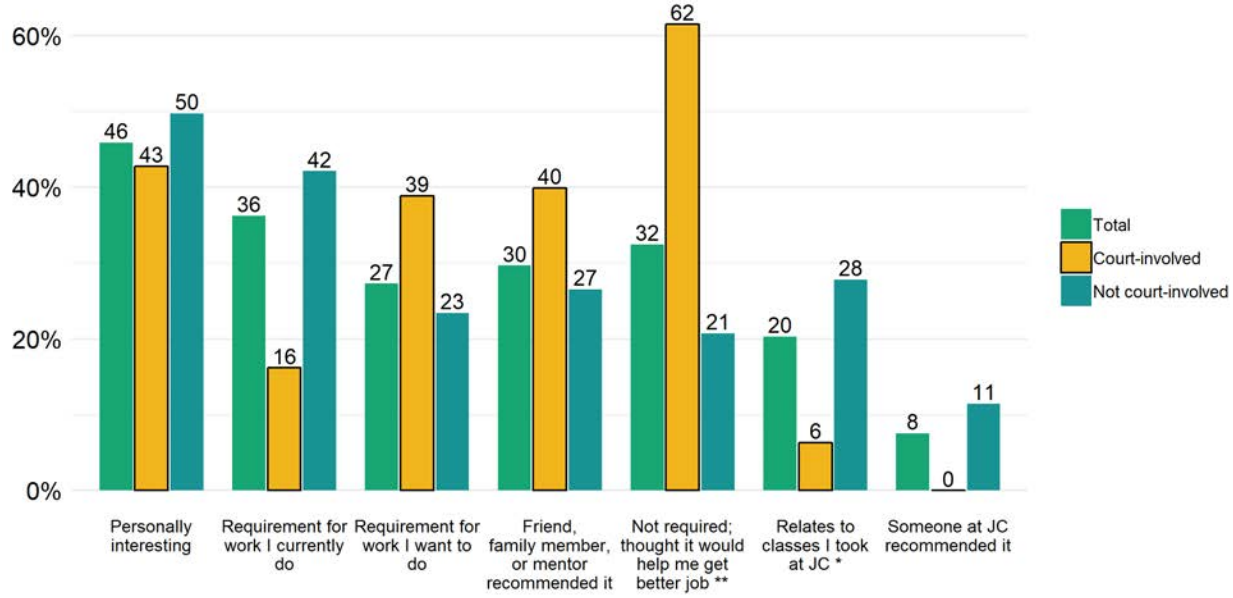
Youth who continued in education following JC reported varying motivations. Almost half of the youth (46 percent) who reported being enrolled in classes reported personal interest as a key motivation (Exhibit VI.3). Youth also reported taking classes because it was a requirement for a current job (36 percent), or because it was a requirement for the work they wanted to do (27 percent). Other common reasons for continuing education included a recommendation from a friend, family member, or mentor (30 percent) or thinking that it would help them get another job (32 percent).

Court-involved participants

Court-involved youth were more likely to report taking a course that was not required but that they thought would help them get a job; however, given the large number of hypotheses tests and small sample sizes, this finding may be spurious. Despite differences in enrollment following JC, there were no measurable differences in expectations for future education between court-involved and not court-involved youth.

At the time of the follow-up survey collection, many JC youth reported that they anticipated obtaining more education in their lifetime (Exhibit VI.4). Despite 98 percent of participants entering YC as high school dropouts, only 35 percent of participants thought that high school or a GED would be their highest level of education. Another 14 percent expected that a vocational/technical diploma or certification, possibly the one received through the JC program, would be their highest level of education. Nearly half (48 percent) expected to attend at least some college, and 12 percent of these respondents hoped to get a graduate degree. Many of the youth who expected to attain at least some college education were not currently enrolled.

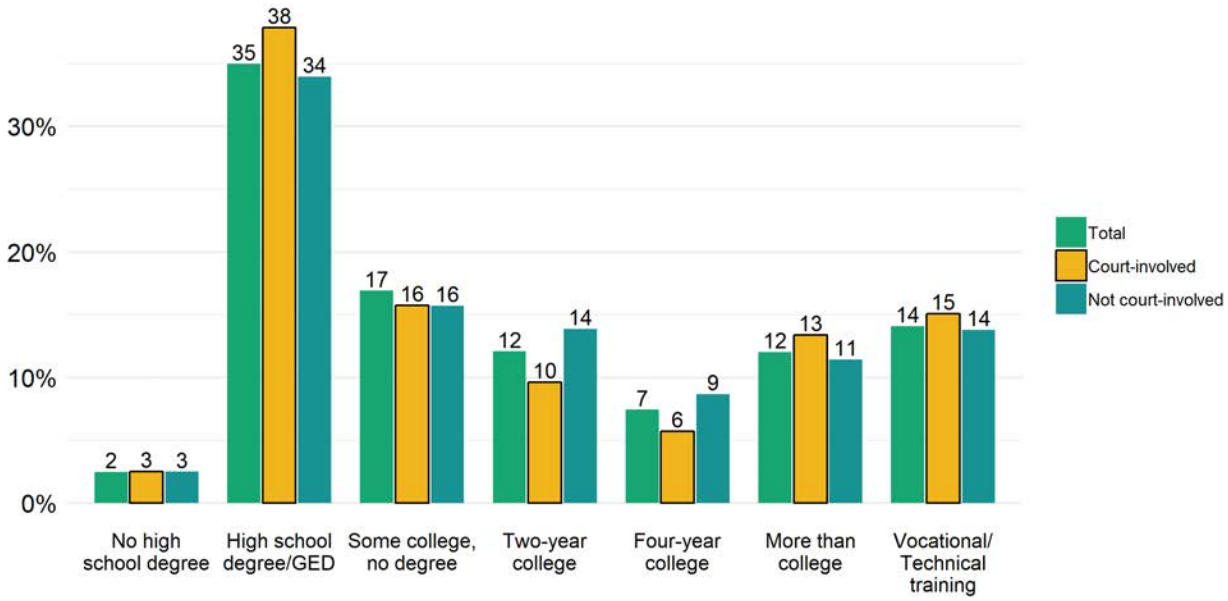
Exhibit VI.3. JC participants' reasons for continuing education (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=40, court-involved: N=10, not court-involved: N=29.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported being enrolled in education at the time of the follow-up survey. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses of the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. One sample member was missing information on court involvement. Participants were asked, "People get more education for different reasons. Please check off the reasons that you wanted to get additional education." Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the non-court-involved youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Exhibit VI.4. JC participants' expectations for future education attainment (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=150, court-involved: N=53, not court-involved: N=95.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. Participants were asked, "What is the highest grade or degree of school you think you will complete in your lifetime?" Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. There were no statistically significant differences in expected education between court-involved youth and non-court-involved youth.

2. Employment

JC training programs were designed to prepare youth to work in occupations with high demand and stable pay. We estimated employment outcomes using data collected through the follow-up survey. At the time they left JC, half of JC youth who responded to the survey said that they had employment lined up for after the program (Exhibit VI.5). By the time of the follow-up survey, an average of 14 months after the end of JC, 81 percent of youth were employed. At the time of the follow-up survey, the average youth earned $379 per week and worked 33 hours in a week.

Half of JC participants had a job lined up at JC exit and 81 percent were employed at follow-up survey collection

Exhibit VI.5. Employment outcomes for JC participants (reported in percentages unless otherwise noted)

Employment outcomes	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value
Employed following program				
At JC exit[a]	50	49	49	
At follow-up survey[a]	81	78	82	
Average weekly earnings (dollars)[b]	379	394	374	
Average hours per week (hours)[b]	33	33	32	
Sample size	**150**	**53**	**95**	

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement.

[a] Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

[b] Average earnings and hours are calculated across all participants. Participants who were not currently employed were assigned a value of zero for both earnings and hours. Statistical significance is estimated using t-tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Among those that were employed at the time of the survey, the average JC participant worked 41 hours each week with a weekly earnings of about $470 (Exhibit VI.6). More than two-thirds of employed JC participants (68 percent) received at least some benefits from their job, including health insurance, paid time off, paid holidays, sick days, and/or retirement benefits. On average, JC participants reported having been at their job for nine weeks at the time of the follow-up survey.

Court-involved participants

Employment outcomes were similar for youth with court involvement and youth with no court-involvement. At JC exit and at the time of the follow-up survey collection, there was no measurable difference in the employment rates of the two groups. Among JC participants who were employed at the time of follow-up survey collection, there were no measurable differences in employment characteristics, including weekly earnings, benefits, hours, and job tenure, between court-involved youth and non-court-involved youth.

At the time of the follow-up survey, employed youth were asked what type of company they work for (industry) and what they do at that company (occupation). The three occupations most commonly reported by youth included "transportation and material moving occupations," "food preparation and serving related occupations," and "installation, maintenance, and repair occupations" (Exhibit VI.7). Consistent with this finding, the most common industry for JC

participants was in "accommodation and food services," which accounted for 21 percent of participant jobs (Exhibit VI.8). Manufacturing and "public administration," which includes the participants who enlisted in the military, were also common industries.[17]

Exhibit VI.6. Employment characteristics among those employed at follow-up

Employment outcomes	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
Average weekly earnings (dollars)	470	508	456	
Average hours per week (hours)	41	43	39	
Job provides fringe benefits (percentage)	68	62	71	
Average job tenure (weeks)	9	9	9	
Sample size	**119**	**38**	**79**	

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported being enrolled in education at the time of the follow-up survey. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. Participants were asked, "People get more education for different reasons. Please check off the reasons that you wanted to get additional education."

[a] Statistical significance is estimated using t-tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

[17] Due to the small number of participants reporting employment in each industry and occupation, we do not report industry and occupation by court involvement.

Exhibit VI.7. Occupations of those employed at follow-up (reported in percentages)

Jobs	Percentage
Transportation and material moving occupations	18
Food preparation and serving related occupations	16
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	13
Production occupations	11
Office and administrative support occupations	10
Sales and related occupations	8
Military specific occupations	7
Personal care and service occupations	5
Healthcare support occupations	4
Protective service occupations	4
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	3
Management occupations	3
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	2
Construction and extraction occupations	2
Education, training, and library occupations	2
Architecture and engineering occupations	1
Computer and mathematical occupations	1
Sample size	**124**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported being employed at the time of the follow-up survey. Because some participants have more than one job, the sum of the share of participants in each occupation may not sum to 100. Occupations were calculated according to the 2010 Standard Occupational Classifications produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Exhibit VI.8. Industries of those employed at follow-up (reported in percentages)

Industry	Percentage
Accommodation and food services	21
Manufacturing	18
Public administration	15
Retail trade	11
Transportation and warehousing	11
Construction	8
Health care and social assistance	5
Other services (except public administration)	5
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	2
Information	2
Wholesale trade	2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1
Sample size	**120**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

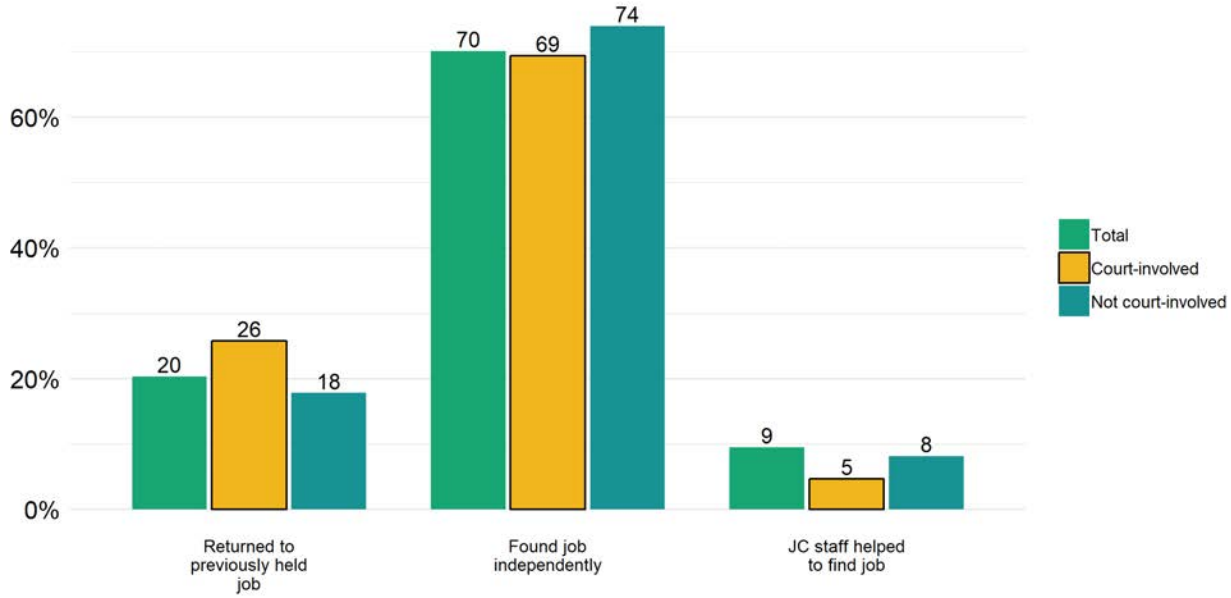
Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported being employed at the time of the follow-up survey. Because some participants have more than one job, the sum of the share of participants in each industry may not sum to 100. Industries were calculated according to the 2012 NAICS industry classification codes.

Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of youth employed at the time of the survey said that JC helped to prepare them for their job. Despite finding the program helpful in preparing them for jobs, only 9 percent of participants who had a job lined up at the end of the program said that JC staff helped them find that first job (Exhibit VI.9). The remaining participants either went back to an old job (20 percent) or found jobs on their own (70 percent). These analyses, however, do not represent the experiences of JC participants who were not working at the time of the follow-up survey and may have had different perceptions of the JC program.

Court-involved participants

Court-involved participants reported using similar methods to find their positions as youth without court-involvement.

Exhibit VI.9. Methods employed participants used to find their first job out of JC (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=75, court-involved: N=25, not court-involved: N=48.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported having had a job at the end of JC. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. The difference in how youth found jobs between court-involved and not court-involved youth is not statistically significant at the 0.1 level.

3. Military

Because YC and JC were quasi-military style programs run by the National Guard, participants were exposed to the employment opportunities associated with joining the military. Preparing youth to be able to enlist was also a goal of the YC and JC programs. Although Some YC participants who wanted to join the military may have been able to do so immediately after the completion of YC, others may not have been accepted to the military given their age, limited education, or court involvement.

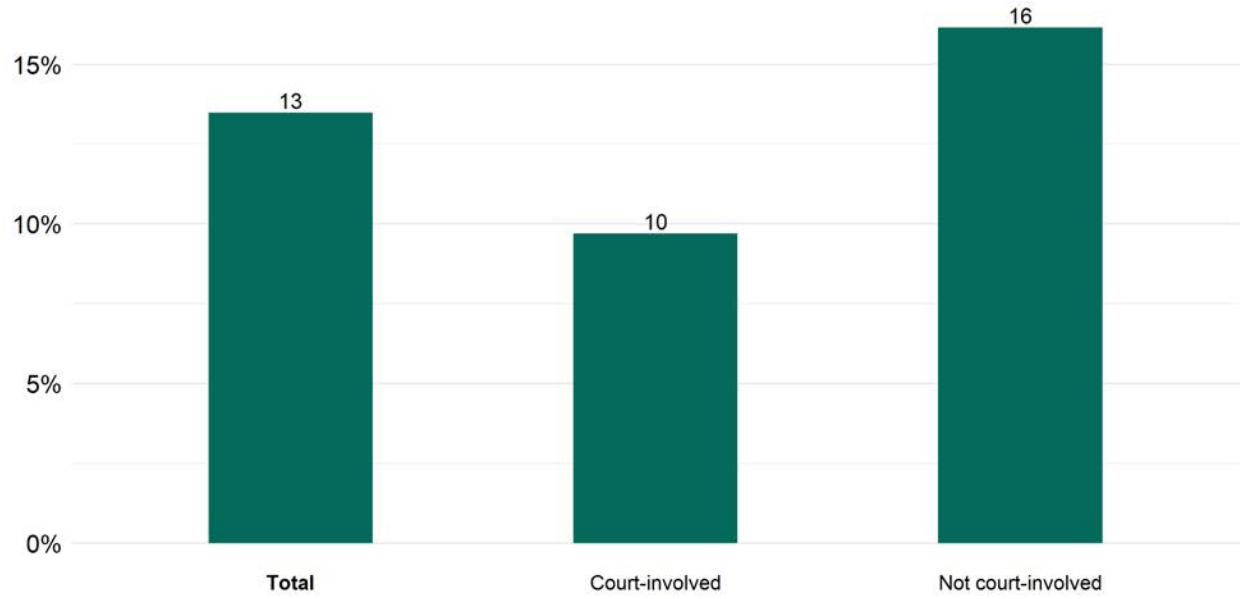
For example, the U.S. Army requires all recruits to have at least a GED; however, the Army enlists only a small number of recruits at this minimal level of education (Powers 2019). College credits could help participants qualify for the military. Some participants may have chosen the JC program to obtain additional training and experience prior to joining the military. Overall, 13

Court-involved participants

There was no measurable difference in military enlistment between court-involved youth and non-court-involved participants.

percent of JC participants reported being enlisted at the time of the follow-up survey, and therefore employed by the military (Exhibit VI.10).

Exhibit VI.10. Military enlistment (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=150, court-involved: N=53, not court-involved: N=95.

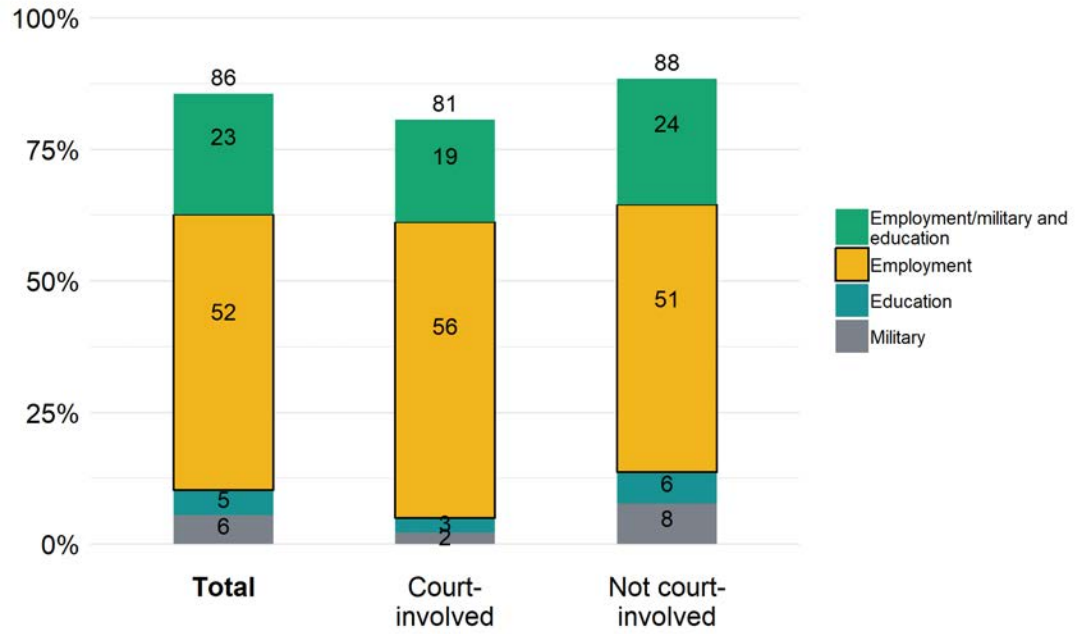
Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. The difference in military enlistment between court-involved and not court-involved youth is not statistically significant at the 0.1 level.

4. Any productive outcome

An overarching goal of JC was to put participants on a path to economic self-sufficiency through education, employment, or military enlistment, referred to as productive activities.[18] Eighty-six percent of youth reported being involved in a productive activity at the time of the follow-up survey collection (Exhibit VI.11). This finding represents a large change from the period prior to YC, in which only 28 percent of participants were working and none were enrolled in school, as discussed in Chapter II. Although this finding does not demonstrate causal evidence of the impact of JC, it shows that most JC participants were substantially more productive following the YC and JC programs.

[18] This should be considered descriptive and not a normative statement. There are other socially productive activities we do not consider, such as volunteering or caring for family members.

Exhibit VI.11. Any productive activity (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=150, court-involved: N=53, not court-involved: N=95.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. The difference in productive activity rates between court-involved and not court-involved youth is not statistically significant at the 0.1 level.

Court-involved participants

There was no measurable difference between court-involved youth and non-court-involved youth in the rate of productive activity. Further, a lower rate of involvement in a productive activity for court-involved youth would not suggest that the JC program was less valuable to them. Because we are unable to learn what participants would have been doing if they had not had the option of JC, we cannot tell whether (or the extent to which) JC improved outcomes of the court-involved relative to non-court-involved participants.

5. Case studies

Looking at average outcomes for JC participants at a single point in time can mask variation over time and across participants. To better capture the experiences of youth over time, we conducted a monthly survey of youth in JC Cohorts 5 and 6 by text message over the course of six months,

starting approximately seven months after the end of JC.[19] Results from the survey showed that many participants' working statuses, hourly wages, and enrollment statuses varied substantially over the course of six months. Because of the low response rates to the text message survey, we only use this data to illustrate examples of employment patterns and not to draw descriptive conclusions on the sample.[20]

Exhibit VI.12 shows snapshots of employment and school enrollment for four JC participants. These participants were chosen to illustrate the range of experiences.

- Participant 1 was steadily employed over the course of the text survey. She worked at least 20 hours each week with her hourly wage in Month 2 actually exceeding her wage in the next three months.
- Participant 2 became employed in Month 3 of the survey and earned steady, slightly increasing hourly wages.
- Participant 3 started the six-month survey employed at $9 per hour. He then experienced a gap in employment at Month 3 but became reemployed at a higher wage of $12 per hour in Month 4. In Month 6, Participant 3 also enrolled in school.
- Participant 4 spent most of the survey period neither employed nor in school, with the exception of Month 5, when he worked 20 to 29 hours per week for an hourly wage of $7 per hour, the federally mandated minimum wage.[21]

These four example participants illustrate the range of employment and school enrollment patterns that JC participants experienced over time. For each of these participants, the findings about participant outcomes would be different depending on the month they were surveyed. Reporting participant averages helps give an overall picture of participant post-program outcomes. However, it is important to interpret these results in the context of the range of experiences they represent.

[19] The text message survey began nine months after the completion of JC for Cohort 5 and five months after the completion of JC for Cohort 6. For more details on the collection of the text survey data, see Appendix B.

[20] Only 12 participants responded to all six months of the text message survey. Among these responses, some included implausible estimates of weekly hours worked or pay.

[21] All wages in Exhibit VI.12 are rounded to the nearest dollar. The federal minimum wage is $7.25 per hour. Participant 4 did not earn under the federally mandated minimum wage.

Exhibit VI.12. Examples of JC participant earnings and school enrollment

	Working		
	Weekly hours	Hourly wage	Enrolled in school
Participant 1: Age 17, Female			
Month 1	20–49	$10	yes
Month 2	20–49	$12	yes
Month 3	40–49	$11	yes
Month 4	30–49	$11	yes
Month 5	30–49	$11	yes
Month 6	20–29	$12	Yes
Participant 2: Age 16, Male			
Month 1	0	-	no
Month 2	0	-	no
Month 3	40–49	$11	no
Month 4	40–49	$12	no
Month 5	20–29	$12	no
Month 6	40–49	$12	no
Participant 3: Age 18, Male			
Month 1	40–49	$9	no
Month 2	1–9	$9	no
Month 3	0	-	no
Month 4	10–19	$12	no
Month 5	40–49	$12	no
Month 6	40–49	$12	yes
Participant 4: Age 16, Male			
Month 1	0	-	no
Month 2	0	-	no
Month 3	0	-	no
Month 4	0	-	no
Month 5	20–29	$7	no
Month 6	0	-	no

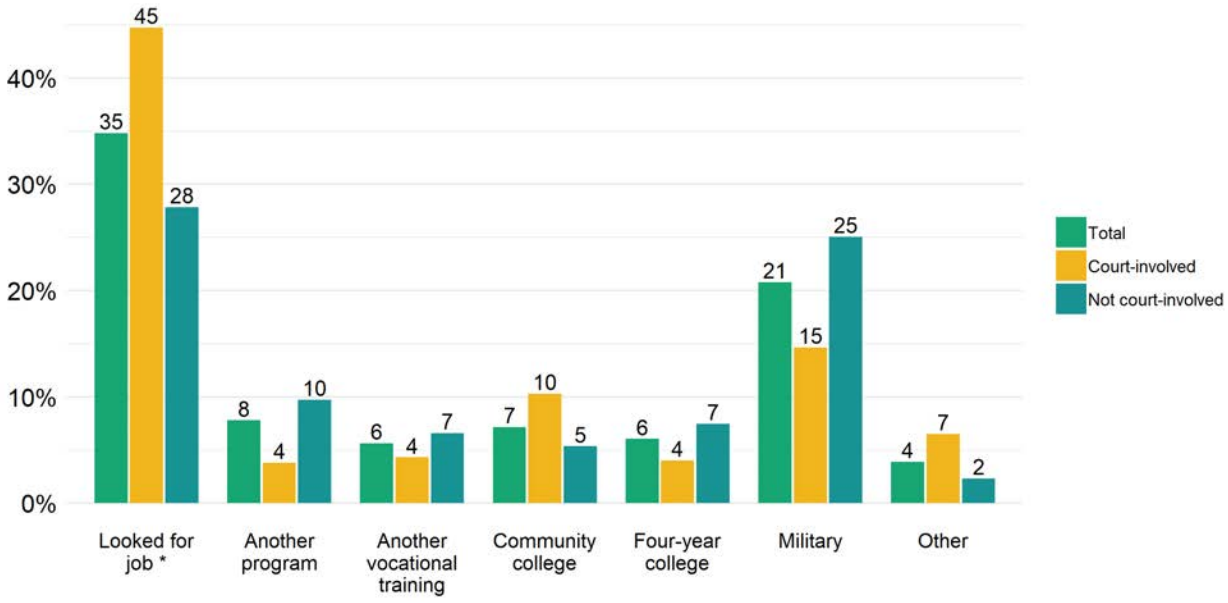
Source: Text message survey.

Note: Hourly wages were rounded to the nearest dollar. No participants in this example reported earning less than $7.25 per hour, which was the federally mandated minimum wage when the text survey was fielded. Wages in months in which there were zero earnings are shown as "-."

6. Youth perceptions of what they would have done in the absence of Job ChalleNGe

Youth responding to the survey provided their perspective on what they would have done following YC in the absence of JC (Exhibit VI.13). The highest proportion (35 percent overall) indicated they would have looked for a job. Only 14 percent thought they would have joined a different program or taken job training courses, and another 13 percent believed they would have gone straight to college following YC. Compared with the 67 percent of participants who enrolled through JC, this evidence suggests that most youth who received college credit through JC would not have obtained college credit otherwise. Finally, 21 percent of youth say they would have joined the military in the absence of JC.

Exhibit VI.13. Self-reports of what participants would have been doing in the absence of JC (reported in percentages)



Source: Follow-up survey weighted data, total: N=150, court-involved: N=53, not court-involved: N=95.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Two sample members were missing information on court involvement. Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

7. Criminal justice outcomes

Youth who did not complete high school are at a higher risk of involvement with the criminal justice system (Sweeten et al. 2009). This risk is even larger for the youth who entered the program with court involvement, and therefore had a higher likelihood of future court involvement. JC programs sought to prevent youth involvement with the criminal justice system by supporting positive youth development during JC and providing access to education and occupational training to support opportunities following JC.

Sixteen percent of JC participants were arrested following YC completion and 7 percent were convicted of a new charge

Based on state criminal justice administrative records, we find that 8 percent of JC participants were arrested for a new crime within one year of YC ending, and 5 percent were convicted for a new crime (Exhibit VI.14). Through the end of criminal justice administrative data collection, 16 percent of JC participants were arrested for a new crime, and 7 percent were convicted for a new crime. These rates represent follow-up periods ranging from 13 months for South Carolina's Cohort 6 up to 31 months for participants in Georgia's Cohort 4 (not shown). Most of the new convictions received by JC participants following YC were for public order crimes, such as driving under the influence or carrying a concealed weapon, or property crimes, such as burglary or larceny (Exhibit VI.15). Drug offenses and violent offenses were less common.

These data provide evidence to suggest that most JC participants avoided contact with the criminal justice system following program. This finding is particularly positive for youth with a history of court involvement, who were at higher risk for returning to the criminal justice system following the program (see text box on court-involved participants). Youth who were convicted of crimes following the program were mainly charged with less severe crimes. Only 1 percent of participants were convicted of a violent offense. For self-reported details of criminal justice involvement of JC participants following the program collected through the follow-up survey, see Appendix F. These results are largely consistent with results from the administrative data.[22]

Exhibit VI.14. Criminal justice outcomes for JC participants (reported in percentages)

Criminal justice outcomes	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
Arrested for a new offense				
One year following YC	8	14	5	***
Anytime during follow-up	16	25	11	***
Convicted for a new offense				

[22] These data are not included in the appendix because of two major limitations. First, youth who were incarcerated or otherwise involved with the justice system likely did not have a means to complete the survey. Second, youth may not self-report justice involvement, particularly in ongoing engagements.

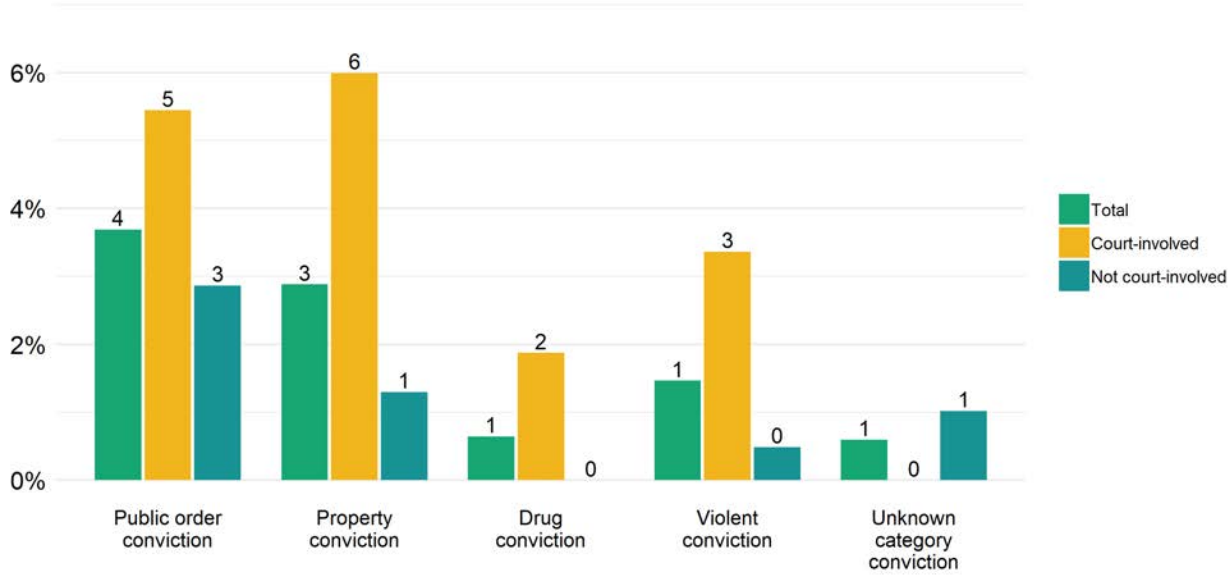
Criminal justice outcomes	Total	Court-involved	Not court-involved	*p*-value[a]
One year following YC	5	9	2	***
Anytime during follow-up	7	13	4	***
Sample size	**304**	**103**	**194**	

Source: Criminal justice weighted administrative data.

Note: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who attended YC Cohorts 4–6. YC program end dates were considered as May 31, 2017, for Cohort 4, December 31, 2018, for Cohort 5, and May 31, 2018, for Cohort 6. Criminal justice data were collected through June 2019 for South Carolina, November 2019 for Michigan, and December 2019 for Georgia. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Seven sample members were missing information on court involvement.

[a] Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the court-involved youth and the not court-involved youth. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Exhibit VI.15. Conviction outcomes by type of charge (reported in percentages)



Source: Criminal justice weighted administrative data.

Note: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who attended YC Cohorts 4–6. YC program end dates were considered as May 31, 2017, for Cohort 4, December 31, 2018, for Cohort 5, and May 31, 2018, for Cohort 6. Criminal justice data were collected through June 2019 for South Carolina, November 2019 for Michigan, and December 2019 for Georgia. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, or spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC. Analyses on the full sample include court-involved youth, not court-involved youth, and youth with missing information on court involvement. Seven sample members were missing information on court involvement.

Court-involved participants

Participants with court-involvement prior to enrollment had higher rates of criminal justice involvement following YC completion than non-court-involved participants. Court-involved participants were more than twice as likely to be arrested for a new crime (25 percent) and more than three times likely to be convicted for a new offense (13 percent) during the follow-up period. Although court-involved youth had higher rates of criminal justice involvement, these estimates are lower than most estimates of recidivism rates for youth with a history of court involvement. For example, one study finds that one-third of court-involved youth were incarcerated by age 25 (Aizer and Doyle 2005).

B. Comparison to Youth ChalleNGe participant outcomes

Previous research from the random assignment ChalleNGe Evaluation documented that YC is effective at improving outcomes for participants (Millenky et al. 2011). Therefore, one key question is what the incremental value is to participants of also attending JC. We are unable to assess the impact of participation in JC given the design used for this study and therefore cannot draw any causal links between observed outcomes and the effectiveness of JC. However, to provide descriptive context, we compare the educational and criminal justice outcomes of JC youth with those who participated only in YC. Because employment outcomes are from the follow-up survey, which was collected only for JC participants, we are unable present this comparison for employment statistics.[23] These results should be interpreted with caution given that (1) as described in Chapter III, there are differences between the characteristics of YC and JC participants, including levels of court involvement, and (2) we cannot account for unobservable characteristics such as motivation and social skills or qualitative program selection criteria such as staff assessment of youth's likelihood of success.

1. Comparison of Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe youth under the Job ChalleNGe grants

JC participants were more likely to receive post-secondary education than those who participated only in YC (Exhibit VI.16). Only 8 percent of YC-only participants were enrolled in post-secondary education within six months of completing YC, relative to 67 percent of JC participants. JC participants were also substantially more likely than YC only participants to receive a certification—45 percent relative to only 2 percent. Given that most participants go straight from YC to JC, both of these differences appear to primarily reflect differences in education gained during the JC program. Consistent with this finding, the differences in enrollment are only present for public two-year colleges and did not persist over time, with a difference of only two percentage points in enrollment between YC and JC participants at one year following YC. Despite the fact that there was no difference in educational attainment

[23] We had originally planned to compare employment outcomes using follow-up data collected by programs in the YC program administrative data. Unfortunately, these data were incomplete, and there was evidence that employment outcomes were biased towards including data on employed participants.

Exhibit VI.16. Education outcomes for JC and YC only participants (reported in percentages)

	Total	YC only	JC	*p*-value[a]
Enrollment in post-secondary education				
Any post-secondary education				
Within six months of YC	26	8	67	***
One year following YC	8	8	10	
Two years following YC[b]	10	11	8	
Enrolled in two-year college				
Within six months of YC	25	7	67	***
One year following YC	7	6	9	
Two years following YC[b]	7	8	5	
Enrolled in four-year college				
Within six months of YC	1	1	0	**
One year following YC	1	2	1	
Two years following YC[b]	3	3	2	
Enrolled in private institution				
Within six months of YC	1	1	0	
One year following YC	0	0	0	
Two years following YC[b]	1	1	2	
Obtained certification[c]				
Within six months of YC	6	0	22	***
Anytime following YC	14	2	45	***
Sample size	**984**	**680**	**304**	

Source: NSC weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Statistics on enrollment in two-year and four-year colleges include both public and private institutions. Statistics on enrollment in private institutions include both two-year and four-year private institutions. Enrollment statistics at one (two) years following YC are estimated as whether the participant was enrolled in school in the semester in which the one (two) year point in time follow YC completion occurred.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between YC only youth and JC youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[b] Outcomes calculated two years following YC do not include YC Cohort 6.

[c] Certification data were not available for Michigan participants. Sample is limited to Georgia and South Carolina.

beyond JC, the credentials earned through JC have the potential to be a valuable signal of employability in the labor market (Grossman et al. 2015).

JC participants were less likely to have criminal justice involvement following YC than participants in YC only. Only 16 percent of JC participants were arrested following YC, relative to 27 percent of participants in YC only (Exhibit VI.17). Although this difference is large and statistically significant, it may represent variation in participant characteristics given that JC participants were seven percentage points less likely to have criminal justice involvement prior

Exhibit VI.17. Criminal justice outcomes for JC and YC only participants (reported in percentages)

Criminal justice outcomes	Total	YC only	JC	*p*-value[a]
Arrested for a new offense				
One year following YC	12	14	8	***
Anytime following YC	24	27	16	***
Convicted for a new offense				
One year following YC	5	5	5	
Anytime following YC	8	8	7	
Sample size	**984**	**680**	**304**	

Source: Criminal justice weighted administrative data.

Note: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Because participants could be convicted of more than one type of crime, the sum of the percentages of participants who were convicted of the four crime types (drug offenses, violent offenses, property crimes, and public order crimes) could be greater than the percentage of participants convicted of a new offense. Rates represent the share of participants with a criminal justice event anytime following the YC program. YC program end dates were considered as May 31, 2017, for Cohort 4, December 31, 2018, for Cohort 5, and May 31, 2018, for Cohort 6. Criminal justice data were collected through June 2019 for South Carolina, November 2019 for Michigan, and December 2019 for Georgia.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between YC only youth and JC youth. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

to YC. There was no measurable difference in conviction rates of JC and YC-only participants. It is worth noting that the conviction rates for both groups were low, with less than 10 percent being convicted of a new crime by the end of data collection.

To assess the degree to which differences in observable characteristics between JC and YC-only participants explain the differences in outcomes, we ran a regression analysis controlling for key observable characteristics of participants. We found that the key takeaways did not change after controlling for observable characteristics. Although this does not account for the full set of differences between JC and YC-only youth, it provides evidence on the extent to which between group differences can be explained by observable characteristics collected in this study. The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix D.

2. Comparison to prior literature

Prior research on the outcomes of YC participants can also provide benchmarks for expected outcomes of JC participants. We compared the outcomes for JC participants to the findings of the ChalleNGe Evaluation (Millenky et al. 2010). The ChalleNGe Evaluation examined outcomes of participants at 10 sites and 18 unique YC cohorts in 2005 and 2006. The sites were selected to be as representative of YC sites overall as much as possible.

There are important qualifications to consider in interpreting a comparison of JC outcomes to previous YC impact study. First, there are meaningful differences in participant characteristics, economic conditions, and program specifics between the JC sites and the sites included in prior research (Millenky et al. 2010). Second, the YC outcomes found in the prior study are an average of the outcomes of participants who would and would not have participated in JC if it had been available. If high-achieving YC participants are more likely to join JC and the JC program increased participants' outcomes, we could not disentangle the effects of each of these factors when interpreting differences in average outcomes for JC participants in this study and YC participants in prior studies. Finally, the prior study of YC was conducted in a different time period with different labor market conditions and job-market opportunities for youth. Despite these limitations, prior research can provide an informative benchmark for JC participant outcomes as YC participants have many similarities to JC participants.

Exhibit VI.18 compares the demographic characteristics of youth entering YC in this study with those of youth who participated in the prior study of YC (Millenky et al. 2010). We do see some differences in the samples. Twenty percent of youth in the ChalleNGe Evaluation were Hispanic compared to eight percent of the YC-only youth in this study. They also had completed less education prior to YC than YC-only participants at JC grantee sites. Despite the JC grant focus on recruiting participants with court involvement, slightly more YC participants at the ChalleNGe Evaluation sites reported having ever been arrested or convicted of a crime prior to YC entrance.

Exhibit VI.18. Comparison of JC youth characteristics with prior research (reported in percentages unless otherwise specified)

	ChalleNGe Evaluation sample of accepted YC participants	YC-only participants	JC participants
Male	88	82	77
Average age	17	16	17
Race and ethnicity			
Hispanic	20	8	8
Non-Hispanic, black	31	53	43
Non-Hispanic, white	43	29	39
Non-Hispanic, other race	0	9	10
Highest grade completed			
8th grade or below	12	8	6
9th grade	32	27	23
10th grade	36	39	42
11th grade	19	21	24
12th grade	1	4	5
Ever suspended from school	82	82	74
Ever arrested	34	30	28
Ever convicted	19	20	15
Sample size	**736**	**680**	**304**

Source: ChalleNGe Evaluation (Millenky et al. 2010), Table A.3, background information form weighted data.

For the outcomes comparison, we used outcomes from the 21-month follow-up survey conducted by Millenky et al., which roughly lined up with the timing of our follow-up survey. Overall, JC youth were significantly more likely (14 percentage points) to be involved in any productive activity. JC participants were three times as likely to have ever enrolled in college and more likely than participants in the Millenky et al. study to receive any college credit, likely because JC participants enrolled in college through the JC program (Exhibit VI.19). JC participants were also 26 percentage points more likely to be employed in the follow-up period.

Exhibit VI.19. Comparison of JC participant outcomes to prior research (reported in percentages unless otherwise specified)

	ChalleNGe Evaluation sample of accepted YC participants[a]	JC participants	
		YC-only	JC[b]
Any productive activity[c,d]	72	-	86***
Post-secondary education			
Enrolled in college/received any college credit[e]	25	17	75***
Currently enrolled in college[e,f]	12	11	8
Currently enrolled in any courses[c]	34	-	28
Employment			
Currently working[c]	55	-	81***
Average weekly earnings (dollars)[c,g]	261	-	379***
Average weekly earnings conditional on working (dollars)[c,g]	475	-	470
Military			
Currently enlisted[c]	11	-	13
Crime and delinquent activity			
Arrested[h]	26	27	16**
Convicted[h]	9	8	7

[a] Source: ChalleNGe Evaluation (Millenky et al. 2010), N = 736.

[b] We conducted statistical tests comparing the JC participant outcomes to the Millenky et al. (2010) participant outcomes. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

[c] JC source: Follow-up survey. N = 150. Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6.

[d] Any productive activity is defined as employment, education, or military enlistment.

[e] YC-only and JC source: NSC weighted data. YC only: N = 680, JC: N = 304. Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6.

[f] Currently enrolled in classes is defined for JC participants as enrollment at the point in time two years following the end of YC to most closely match the Millenky et al. (2010) survey timing.

[g] Shown in 2019 real dollars based on CPI-U.

[h] Source: Criminal justice administrative weighted data. YC only: N = 680, JC: N = 304. Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6.

The differences in college enrollment between the two studies are large and therefore unlikely to be explained by differences in youth characteristics. This finding is supported by the fact that

most JC participants reported that they did not think they would have enrolled in college in the absence of JC. Given differences in youth characteristics and motivation as well as economic circumstances, it is unclear whether the high employment rates of JC participants compared with the Millenky et al. sample imply that the program was effective. However, the results suggest that this area is promising for future research to assess the impacts of JC

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VII. LESSONS FROM THE JOB CHALLENGE EVALUATION

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) piloted JC as an innovative strategy that builds upon the successes of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program. As the earlier ChalleNGe Evaluation described, YC participants were more likely to have earned a GED or completed high school, earned college credits, and be employed, but youth reported that it was hard to maintain momentum and carve out a path forward as they returned to their communities. To continue supporting YC graduates, the JC program provides them with the opportunity to further their education and vocational training in preparation for a career.

In April 2015, DOL launched the JC program with three grants to YC programs in South Carolina, Michigan, and Georgia. These grants had two goals: to improve youth education and employment outcomes by (1) increasing access to YC for court-involved youth and (2) developing the new occupationally focused JC program, which built on the YC environment while offering participants more freedom and new opportunities. As voluntary and free programs that offered a combined 42 weeks of residential programming, YC and JC offered a unique opportunity for young people to not only "get back on track" but build skills for a successful career.

All three grantees launched new residential programs and developed partnerships with community colleges to offer participants occupational training and access to a college experience. The leadership for each program identified nearby lodging, hired program staff, and coordinated closely with their companion YC program(s) to select among YC graduates. Overall, the three JC programs recruited and enrolled 905 youth between January 2016 and December 2018, including 333 in Georgia, 301 in Michigan, and 271 in South Carolina. This total exceeded DOL's overall target of 900 participants.

In this chapter, we summarize our key findings on program implementation, the outcomes of JC participants, and considerations for the future.

A. Findings on program implementation

DOL had two distinct goals for the JC grants: (1) to provide more court-involved youth with access to an evidence-based youth program and (2) to implement a new occupationally intensive program for YC graduates to further support youth development and prepare youth for the labor market. For grantees, the primary focus was the substantial undertaking of establishing the new JC program. Grantees continued to serve court-involved youth and placed a higher priority on documenting court involvement, but they did not substantially alter YC recruitment practices to reach new groups of participants or adjust service delivery for court-involved youth.

1. Increasing access to YC for court-involved youth

Programs reported difficulty reconciling the focus of the DOL grant with the existing National Guard criteria for Youth ChalleNGe. The National Guard eligibility criteria

explicitly states that participants may not be currently on parole or probation for other than juvenile status offenses, awaiting sentencing, under indictment, or accused or convicted of a felony. Further, it states that participants cannot have any pending court dates once the program starts. Without a clear definition from DOL and an agreement with the National Guard that allowed a shift from the existing criteria, programs defined court involvement as they saw fit.

Programs already had recruitment partners in the justice system and continued to draw on them. YC programs reported receiving referrals from the Department of Juvenile Justice and family courts. YC programs also collaborated with local judges who made referrals as part of diversion programs.

YC staff did not perceive a need to shift programmatic practices, because they already served young people who fit the definition of "court-involved." Programs did not find it appropriate or necessary to single out court-involved youth during their time in YC or JC. They believed they were already serving this population, even if at a slightly lower rate, and that the existing programming met their needs. YC program staff also expressed concern about their program being labeled as a program targeting court-involved youth.

2. Implementation of JC program

Having a large YC partner program facilitated recruitment. JC programs with smaller YC feeder programs reported greater recruitment challenges. While two JC programs recruited from a single YC program in their respective states, Georgia recruited from three YC programs within the state, and its YC partner program was substantially larger than the YC programs in South Carolina and Michigan. This meant that the Georgia JC program had a larger pool of qualified applicants hence allowing them to be more selective and to give priority to court-involved youth.

Although programs prioritized court-involved youth in the JC application process, the grantees did not reach the DOL performance target of 50 percent court-involved youth. Among study participants, JC youth were actually less likely to be court-involved than YC youth. We were not able to determine whether this difference reflected interest in the JC program or JC eligibility.

Programs found that they needed more supervision of youth than initially planned. At the start of JC, program staff gave JC participants substantially more freedom than during YC, as they expected that YC graduates would have acquired a higher level of maturity. The housing mirrored this approach by offering youth at least some level of privacy that was not available in YC. However, that approach evolved over time as staff realized that participants did not yet have the self-discipline and still needed a more structured environment. Even with this change, JC offered a more relaxed environment than YC.

JC program administrators found that they needed more resources than originally anticipated for the residential program. They reported that additional resources were needed

to support the cost of food, staffing, and the location of the housing. For housing, proximity to the partner community college and to YC was important and played into both costs and other logistics. Staffing needs, as noted above, were lower than for YC, but higher than programs had budgeted for in their DOL grants. However, JC programs on military bases (where many YC programs are located) could leverage cost-cutting in other areas.

JC programs relied on close partnerships with community colleges to deliver vocational training and provide career counseling to youth. Program staff reported that, although youth liked the opportunity to be a part of the college, there was a benefit to having some JC-student-only courses at the community colleges. It provided an opportunity for JC participants to adjust to the college environment, and the pace of the course and the approach to discipline could be shifted to the needs of the JC program. The disadvantage of this approach was that youth reported in focus group discussions that separate sections made them feel less like they were part of the college.

Programs struggled to offer youth work-based learning opportunities. Program staff reported that they had to get creative to offer youth exposure to a workplace, because so many participants were minors. In the survey of JC participants, job shadowing and field trips were approximately twice as common as internships.

B. Findings on Job ChalleNGe participant outcomes

The primary goal of JC was to help prepare youth for employment. Grantees offered youth access to intensive occupational training courses at partner community colleges, as well as additional secondary and postsecondary courses. Using survey data and administrative data on postsecondary education and criminal justice involvement, we examined outcomes as many as 14 months after JC.

Most JC participants found employment following the program, and many felt that JC helped prepare them for these jobs. By the time of follow-up survey collection, approximately 14 months after JC, more than 80 percent of JC participants were employed. Among those employed, 66 percent said they felt JC helped prepare them for their job.

Court-involved JC participants achieved similar rates of employment as non-court-involved participants. Among JC participants who were employed at the time of follow-up survey collection, there were no measurable differences in employment characteristics—including weekly earnings, benefits, hours, and job tenure—between court-involved youth and non-court-involved youth.

Youth had relatively low levels of involvement with the criminal justice system. Using state criminal justice administrative records, we found that 8 percent of JC participants were arrested for a new crime within one year of YC ending, and 5 percent were convicted of a new crime. Participants who were court-involved before enrollment were more likely to be arrested for a new crime (14 percent) and be convicted for a new offense (9 percent) during the same one-year

period after YC. Although the rate of criminal justice involvement is substantially lower than most estimates of recidivism rates for youth with a history of court involvement (Aizer and Doyle 2005), youth who choose to attend YC and JC may be different than typical youth with court-involvement.

There is also evidence to suggest that JC improved education outcomes beyond what youth would have achieved without the program. Although this study cannot provide causal evidence, JC program participants enrolled in post-secondary education at a higher rate than YC participants who did not continue to Job ChalleNGe. JC participants were more than eight times as likely to enroll in post-secondary education within six months of completing YC (67 percent compared with 8 percent). JC participants were also substantially more likely than YC only participants to receive a certification—45 percent relative to only 2 percent. Both of these differences reflect differences in education gained during JC, as only 10 percent of JC participants were enrolled in post-secondary education at the one-year mark following YC completion.

C. Considerations for the future

Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike are broadly focusing on the type of programming offered through Job ChalleNGe (Pollack 2017). A high school diploma or high school equivalency credential is not enough to put a young person on the road to success and financial security in adulthood (Clark and Martorell 2014).

At this report's release, the Job ChalleNGe program continues in the three pilot sites, without funding from DOL, plus a few additional locations around the country. This study offers lessons that can inform current and future programming for Job ChalleNGe. The pilot program was unique in that it layered the DOL-funded JC program atop the DOD-funded Youth ChalleNGe program. This approach created additional perceived challenges for the programs as they tried to follow guidelines, funding requirements, and performance goals from different federal agencies. Going forward, JC is a DoD-led initiative, so JC programs will have the increased flexibility of working under only DoD guidelines.

Although the outcomes for JC participants are encouraging, this study does not provide evidence on the effectiveness of JC program. Understanding the impact of JC on the employment, education, and criminal justice outcomes of youth participants requires an impact study, but aspects of the JC program, including small cohorts and enrolling from a fixed population of YC graduates, make it difficult to conduct a random assignment study. As the number of JC programs increases, there may be additional opportunities to measure the program's impact including evaluation designs that compare the outcomes of JC participants to the outcomes of similar youth enrolled in other YC programs that do not have access to JC.

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Appendix A

Job ChalleNGe Program Profiles

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Grantee Profile: Georgia Job ChalleNGe

Georgia Job ChalleNGe

Program name: Georgia Job ChalleNGe Program

Grantee name: National Guard Youth ChalleNGe(YC)/Job ChalleNGe (JC) Academy

JC grant amount: $4,000,000

JC location: Fort Stewart, Georgia

Partner YC site: Georgia National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Academy, Fort Stewart, Georgia

Occupational training partner: Savannah Technical College

Contextual factors

Located on the same Army base as a YC site, which facilitated use of YC staff and other resources

Atmosphere of a large military base with cadets housed in barracks with slightly more privacy than in YC and with limited ability to use base facilities

Program services

Occupational training tracks: Welding, culinary arts, apartment/hotel management, automotive repair, and certified nursing assistant

Certificate/credentials available: Diploma/GED, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Microsoft Office, certificates in each field

Work-based learning: Opportunities included field-based training such as practice climbing commercial communications towers, working in medical facilities, or other opportunities such as hearing from guest speakers and going on field trips.

Non-Academic services: Opportunities included work readiness and life skills taught through a for-credit college class, a career pathways course provided by workforce system partners; career and academic counseling through YC counseling staff; and leadership opportunities, including supervising cadet activities, representing JC in the community, and serving on the youth council.

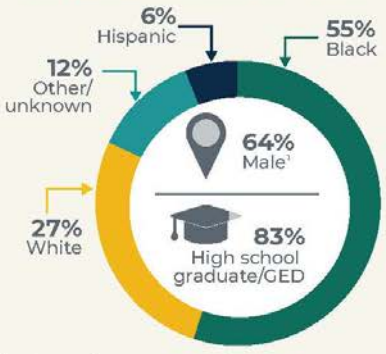
YC and JC enrollment

	Number of youth enrolled	Percent court involved	Percent of court involved that completed	Percent of all youth that completed
YC	1,385	45%	60%	48%
JC	333	53%	86%	93%

Source: Grantee performance reports that JC grantees submitted to DOL between September 2017 and December 2018. The completion numbers contained in the performance reports cannot be verified using other available data sources.

Definition of court-involved youth: Anyone involved in the court system, excluding foster youth. Only individuals with juvenile offense histories. Applicants could not be on probation unless they received a letter stating probation would be suspended during participation.

Demographic characteristics of JC participants at enrollment



Source: Grantee performance reports.
[1] 14 percent of Georgia's JC youth had missing values for gender.

Grantee Profile: Michigan Job ChalleNGe

Michigan Job ChalleNGe

Program name: Michigan Job ChalleNGe (JC) Program

Grantee name: Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

JC grant amount: $3,995,709

JC location: Fort Custer Training Center, Battle Creek, Michigan

Partner YC site: Michigan Youth ChalleNGe (YC) Academy, Battle Creek, Michigan (VA Campus)

Occupational training partner: Kellogg Community College (Regional Manufacturing and Training Center)

Contextual factors

Located a few miles from its partner YC site, which administrators report made using YC staff and program resources relatively simple but presented some challenges

Located on a National Guard training facility with cadets housed in dorm-like accommodations at the base hotel, which made it possible to use base resources but also meant sharing space with regular military personnel

Program services

Occupational training tracks: Information technology; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), medical first responder, certified nursing assistant, welding, electrical, pipe fitting, and robotics

Certificate/credentials available: Diploma/GED, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Microsoft Office, certificates in each field

Work-based learning: Opportunities included field-based training such as practice climbing commercial communications towers, working in medical facilities, or other opportunities such as hearing from guest speakers and going on field trips.

Non-Academic services: Opportunities included work readiness and life skills taught through a for-credit college class; career and academic counseling through JC program staff, and leadership opportunities, including supervising cadet activities and representing JC in the community.

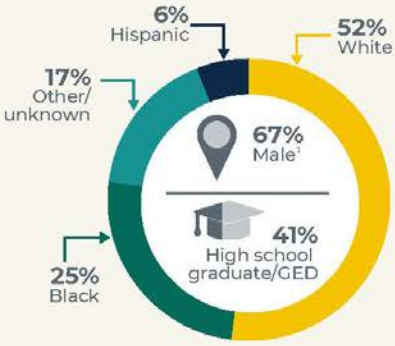
YC and JC enrollment

	Number of youth enrolled	Percent court involved	Percent of court involved that completed	Percent of all youth that completed
YC	928	33%	63%	79%
JC	301	43%	75%	NA

Source: Grantee performance reports that JC grantees submitted to DOL between September 2017 and December 2018. The completion numbers contained in the performance reports cannot be verified using other available data sources.
NA = not available

Definition of court-involved youth: Anyone who has been formally adjudicated, arrested, or charged. Also includes anyone in the foster care system or family court system. No open or pending cases or youth on probation are allowed.

Demographic characteristics of JC participants at enrollment



Source: Grantee performance reports.
[1] 16 percent of Michigan's JC youth had missing values for gender

Grantee Profile: South Carolina Job ChalleNGe

South Carolina Job ChalleNGe (JC)

Program name: South Carolina Youth ChalleNGe (YC) Academy POST ChalleNGe Program

Grantee name: South Carolina Military Department

JC grant amount: $3,994,475

JC location: Aiken, South Carolina

Partner YC site: South Carolina Youth ChalleNGe Academy, Eastover, South Carolina (McCrady Training Center, Fort Jackson)

Occupational training partner: Aiken Technical College

Contextual factors

Located about 70 miles from its partner YC site, which administrators reported made it challenging to use YC staff and resources

Rural environment at a university retreat center, with access to ropes courses and outdoor activities; students housed in cabins with bunk beds

Program services

Occupational training tracks: Tower tech (cell phone tower climbing and repair), patient care assistance, computer networking and installation, welding, and production/operations

Certificate/credentials available: Diploma/GED, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Microsoft Office, certificates in each field

Work-based learning: Opportunities included field-based training such as practice climbing commercial communications towers, working in medical facilities, or other opportunities such as hearing from guest speakers and going on field trips.

Non-Academic services: Opportunities included work readiness and life skills taught in a for-credit college class and supplemental, staff-organized classes; career and academic counseling through JC program staff; and leadership opportunities, including supervising cadet activities.

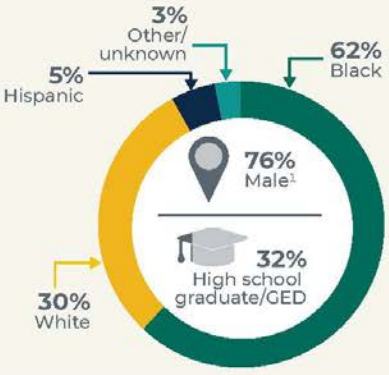
YC and JC enrollment

	Number of youth enrolled	Percent court involved	Percent of court involved that completed	Percent of all youth that completed
YC	782	31%	74%	NA
JC	271	35%	43%	89%

Source: Grantee performance reports that JC grantees submitted to DOL between September 2017 and December 2018. The completion numbers contained in the performance reports cannot be verified using other available data sources.
NA = not available

Definition of court-involved youth: Anyone who has been involved with the juvenile system, adult system, or social services (homeless or foster youth). Cannot have a violent offense. Open to individuals with pending juvenile charges.

Demographic characteristics of JC participants at enrollment



Source: Grantee performance reports.
[1]One percent of South Carolina's JC youth had missing values for gender.

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Appendix B

Quantitative Data Sources

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In this appendix, we describe quantitative data collection and the contents of the four types of data sources used in this report. First, we describe the background and contact information data, which were collected in the background information form. Next, we describe the administrative program data that grantees and DOL provided for the purposes of this study. We then describe the administrative outcomes data, including data on criminal justice outcomes obtained from state criminal justice agencies and data on educational outcomes from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Finally, we describe the survey data collected through the follow-up survey of participants and the text message survey.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM

Background information forms (BIFs) were collected from all participants participating in the study. In addition to the BIF, all participants returned a completed youth consent form and an additional parent consent form if they were younger than 18 at the time of enrollment in the study. The consent forms, for both parents and youth, described the evaluation and ensured that the study participants had been fully informed about the implications of participating in the study, the data collection elements, and data security.

For Cohorts 4–6, Mathematica trained a group of field staff in each location on the process for collecting BIFs and consent materials. Field staff then visited YC and JC programs during intake, visitations, or family days, when it was expected parents would already be on-site to complete the parent consent form (where applicable). This method was developed after our collection of pilot data in earlier cohorts revealed logistical issues with having YC and JC program staff collect consent materials and BIFs.

Forms were to be distributed as close to the start of the YC program as possible. However, due to the challenges program staff faced with collecting BIFs and limited windows for field staff visits, BIF collection dates varied relative to the start of each program. In some cases, if the BIF could not be collected over the course of YC, it was collected at the beginning of JC.

The BIFs collected demographic information and information on prior educational attainment, prior employment, delinquency, and criminal justice involvement history. We also collected multiple forms of contact information, including social media contact information, to help ensure successful follow-up data collection in the future. Regardless of when youth completed the form, the questions on prior education, employment, and delinquency referenced the time period before youth began YC.

For estimates of the share of youth who completed a BIF, see Appendix C.

PROGRAM DATA

1. Youth ChalleNGe program data

The YC program data were collected by program staff through the National Guard Cadet Tracking system—a robust management information system that all YC programs used. Through this, YC programs collected information on participant characteristics, the duration of program involvement, program completion, the types of services received, and outcomes for youth at varying intervals in the 12 months following the program (including education, employment, and military enrollment). Participant characteristics available in the program data include gender, date of birth or age, and race. Michigan and South Carolina also provided an indicator for court involvement.

The YC program data presented several key limitations. First, although the data format and content were similar across sites, notable differences existed across sites, which limited our ability to conduct pooled analyses of all three sites. For example, sites all provided data on participant test scores, but the tests on which they reported varied. Michigan reported both the Test of Adult Based Education (TABE) and the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Batters (ASVAB) score at entrance, South Carolina reported only the ASVAB score, and Georgia reported only the TABE score. Second, Georgia did not provide adequate identifying information for matching data on participants from the program data to other study data on participants. Finally, South Carolina only provided program data for participants who completed the YC program.

Given these limitations, we were unable to use the program data for much of our analysis. For example, we could not use program data on services in analyses, except for high school/GED completion. Similarly, data on participant post-program outcomes were not standardized and were underpopulated. There was also evidence that the coverage of the program data on participant post-program was nonrandom, with participants with a history of employment more likely to have program data on employment outcomes. As a result of this bias, small sample sizes due to missing data, and the inability to link Georgia participants to the YC data, we did not use program data to assess post-program outcomes.

We were able, however, to use the data to compare the participant characteristics for consenters and nonconsenters to assess the risk of nonconsent bias and create consent weights (see Appendix X for details). We used the following participant characteristics for this analysis: gender, date of birth or age, race, and court involvement (Michigan and South Carolina only). We also used participant characteristics to supplement data collected through the BIF to create data requests for data on criminal justice outcomes and the NSC data.

2. Job ChalleNGe program data

Program data for JC participants was collected by JC staff separately from YC data at each program rather than using a standardized collection system. Each site provided the study with JC rosters but did not all provide the same information. South Carolina provided cohort-specific

rosters with minimal additional information. Georgia provided JC rosters with data on JC training program and JC completion. Michigan provided program data in a similar format to the YC program data, as tracked by the National Guard Cadet Tracking system.

We used the JC program data to identify which youth in the study actually participated in JC. Although each site gave us this information before the start of each JC cohort, many youth who were expected to participate in JC did not end up participating. Additional information from the JC program data was not used in study analyses because it was not documented consistently across the sites.

GRANTEE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

For performance reporting purposes, DOL gave grantees a template to track aggregate measures of YC and JC program progress on a monthly basis. The spreadsheet tracked the following measures with columns for the current cohort as well as all youth enrolled program-to-date:

- Enrollment overall
- Enrollment for court-involved youth
- Completion for court-involved youth
- General demographics of the youth
- Overall YC completion rate
- Overall JC completion rate (***not*** required but two states tracked it)
- Post-program outcomes for JC participants on employment, education, or military

In this study, we used data from the grantee performance reports for two purposes. First, we used the data to report overall participant demographics in the grantee profiles. Second, we used the performance reports to develop the completion rate statistics. An important caveat is that the completion statistics from the performance reports are incomplete and contain inconsistencies due to issues described below.

We intended to use data from the grantee performance reports to describe post-program outcomes for participants, but this was not possible because of the following data issues:

- **Inconsistent use of the template.** Grantees from different programs filled out the reporting spreadsheet in different ways. For example, all reports were missing information for some fields, but those fields varied. Additionally, some staff reported that different staff within a site did not always complete the template in the same way.
- **Incomplete or missing data.** Many of the monthly reports from grantees were missing data. For example, in one site, data on the total number of people who completed YC overall were missing. In other sites, data on the number of JC participants without court involvement who

completed the program were missing. In general, the template provided to grantees did not adequately capture YC or JC completion data for non-court-involved youth.

- **Unreliable data within the spreadsheet.** Across all grantees, inconsistencies were evident in the data across months, or even within a month. For example, in all states, there were months for which the sum of the total number of youth who completed the program and the total number of youth who dropped out of the program or were removed was a number that was higher or lower than the total number of youth enrolled overall.

Because of these data quality issues, we refrained from using the performance report data for any primary analyses. We were not able to use these data to validate the survey or program data or to describe completion rates from non-court-involved participants in YC or JC.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA

We collected data on criminal arrests and convictions for youth following YC from state criminal justice agencies. To obtain these data, we submitted a list of all YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who consented to study participation at each JC grantee site to the criminal justice agency in the state where the program was located. Each state agency matched YC participants to the database of adult criminal justice outcomes using probabilistic matching algorithms based on Social Security number, name, date of birth, and sex. Each agency then returned a data file with the criminal justice outcomes for each participant. Exhibit B.1 shows the number of months for which we collected criminal justice data for each cohort and site.

Exhibit B.1. Months of coverage of criminal justice administrative data, by site and cohort

YC cohort	Program end date considered	State and criminal justice data end date		
		Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
		December 2019	November 2019	June 2019
4	May 31, 2017	31 months	30 months	25 months
5	December 31, 2017	24 months	23 months	18 months
6	May 31, 2018	19 months	18 months	13 months

These data present three key limitations:

1. **Limited to criminal justice events in these three states.** Because we only submitted data requests to the three states with JC programs, criminal justice outcomes do not cover out-of-state criminal justice events. Although all of the participants lived in state at YC entrance, some participants might have moved out of state after leaving the program.

2. **Differences in types of data states provided.** For example, Michigan did not provide data on arrests that had been adjudicated but for which there was no conviction. The data each site provided are described in more detail below.
3. **Differences in definition of 'adult' across states.** Data only cover charges for which the criminal justice system considered the participants as legal adults. In Georgia, people are tried as adults for any crime if they are 17 and older[24] or if they are charged with certain violent crimes and are 13 and older.[25] In Michigan, people are tried as adults if they are 17 and older.[26] In South Carolina, for most of our sample period, people were tried as adults for any crime if they were 17 and older, but this law changed on July 1, 2019, to raise the age to 18.[27] South Carolina youth older than 14 can be tried as adults for certain felony charges, and youth of any age can be tried as adults for murder or criminal sexual conduct. They may also be tried as adults if they are charged with a felony or if they have been previously charged with a felony.[28]

We estimated outcomes using the following data from each state agency:

- **Georgia.** Georgia records were provided by Research Provider Applied Research Services from the Georgia Crime Information Center, which serves as the state repository for information on Georgia's criminal history records. Individual records included arrest dates, arrest offense categorizations, disposition dates, conviction offense categorizations, final dispositions, and sentencing information. Personally identifiable information was stripped from these records and replaced with unique, randomly generated ID numbers. Information on charges included all Georgia charge codes and descriptions. Data were provided through December 2019.
- **Michigan.** Michigan records, obtained from the Michigan State Police, were provided across six files: demographic information, supplemental demographics, incident, arrest, charge, and judicial. Arrest and judicial files were combined using individual criminal tracking numbers to link arrests and dispositions. Arrests or charges that had been adjudicated at the time of

[24]Shein, Marcia. "At What Age Can You Be Tried as an Adult in Georgia?" Federal Criminal Law Center, 2014. Available at https://federalcriminallawcenter.com/2014/11/age-can-tried-adult-georgia/ Accessed October 11, 2019.

[25]Certain violent crimes include murder, murder in the second degree, voluntary manslaughter, rape, aggravated sodomy, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sexual battery, and armed robbery with a firearm. Children younger than 17 may also be prosecuted for these offenses in juvenile court, at the discretion of the district attorney or superior court (GA Code § 15-11-560 [2014]).

[26]National Juvenile Defender Center. "Michigan Juvenile Indigent Defense Delivery System." July 2018. Available at https://njdc.info/practice-policy-resources/state-profiles/michigan/. Accessed October 11, 2019.

[27]Epps, Quaniqua. "Change in SC Law Has 17-Year-Olds Considered Juveniles." *WCBD News 2,* November 3, 2017. Available at https://www.counton2.com/news/south-carolina-news/change-in-sc-law-has-17-year-olds-considered-juveniles/. Accessed October 11, 2019.

[28]Certain felony charges include any felony that carries a sentence of up to 15 years, assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature, or any felony that carries a sentence of up to 10 years for youth with two or more prior convictions (South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 63-19-1210 20-7-7605).

data production but did not result in a conviction were not included. Charge categories were provided for each conviction, but no charge was provided for arrests pending disposition. Data were provided through November 2019.

- **South Carolina.** South Carolina records include data from the South Carolina State Law Enforcement criminal history files. Data were obtained in six files: identification, arrest, count, custody, judicial, and aliases. Arrest, count, and judicial files were combined using encrypted record-level linking IDs and unique internal linking numbers. Information on charges included all South Carolina charge codes and literal descriptions. Data were provided through June 2019.

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE DATA

The NSC maintains a comprehensive administrative database with information on student enrollment in postsecondary education and postsecondary degree completion. Participating postsecondary institutions report information on enrollment and degree attainment directly to the NSC. This includes data on more than 99 percent of U.S. colleges and universities, including all three JC partner institutions. The NSC shares this information with outside organizations through its StudentTracker service.[29] A record containing the following elements is provided for each enrollment spell at each institution in which a student enrolled:

- Name of the postsecondary institution attended
- Dates of enrollment, enrollment status (for example, full-time, part-time)
- Program major
- Information on whether a student graduates from the program
- For graduates:
  - Graduation date
  - Type of degree
  - Degree major

We gave the NSC the names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers for participants who provided consent to participate in the study. The NSC matched these records to its database using a proprietary algorithm that accounts for variations in names and dates of birth. To ensure we matched as many records as possible, we submitted multiple spellings or variants of names and dates of birth when they differed across our data collections, then reconciled the matches from NSC. The StudentTracker report from NSC included postsecondary enrollment information for

[29] National Student Clearinghouse, "StudentTracker." Available at https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/studenttracker/

participants beginning in January 1, 2015, before any cohorts of participants would have enrolled in YC, through October 16, 2019, when we submitted our request to NSC.

Using the StudentTracker report, we created indicator variables for each enrollment spell or credential record reported for a participant. Based on each participant's YC cohort, we created indicators for whether the participant was enrolled during four time points: within six months of completing YC, one year following completion of YC, two years following completing of YC, and at any point after YC completion.[30] Enrollment at a point in time was defined as whether the participant was enrolled in the semester in which that point in time occurred. We also created indicators of whether a credential record occurred within six months of YC completion and at any point after YC completion. For each enrollment spell, we also created indicators for whether the participant was enrolled in a two- or four-year institution and whether the participant was enrolled in a private institution.

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

1. Collection method

The sample for the follow-up web survey included JC participants in Cohorts 4, 5 and 6 who gave consent to participate in the evaluation (and whose parents or guardians did so, when necessary). The follow-up survey covered five broad topics:

- Experiences during JC, such as the services the participant received
- Employment and earnings, such as the characteristics of a current job or the participant's recent work search efforts
- Educational experiences, including attainment and future plans
- Involvement in the court system, such as whether the participant was arrested and convicted of a crime
- Views about the value of different aspects of the JC program

Participants were notified about the survey request via mail, email, and text message using a two-phase approach. This approach was designed to address challenges related to aging contact information, which was originally provided as part of the BIF. By the time the follow-up survey was collected, contact information from the BIF was up to two years old. This was particularly problematic for Cohort 4, which was fielded later than planned due to delays in receiving approval from the Office of Management and Budget for the follow-up data collection.

[30] Because we could only observe enrollment outcomes through October 2019, we did not include outcomes at two-years following YC for YC Cohort 6 in the analysis. These outcomes would have only included a five-month period from June to October 2019, when the NSC data were collected.

Phase 1. In the first phase, participants were directed to the web survey via email and text message. The first phase did not use home addresses because we expected that much of the address information from the BIF may have changed as participants left the JC program.

Phase 2. In the second phase, conducted about two to three weeks into data collection, trained locators at Mathematica's Survey Operations Center attempted to collect additional contact information for participants who had not responded. To do this, they reached out to sites for any additional contact information. In addition, the full sample was submitted to Accurint[31], and all possible telephone numbers, home addresses, and email addresses were returned to locators for review and confirmation with the participants. The locators reviewed contact information for participants who had not completed and made calls to all possible telephone numbers and alternate contacts collected in the BIF. The purpose of these calls was to alert participants of the survey, answer any questions they might have, and confirm the best information for resending the web survey information, if needed. In this phase, the study also created an Instagram account and used Instagram direct messaging to contact participants who had provided their Instagram contact information in the BIF.

All participants who completed the survey received $30 in Amazon.com credit.

2. Timing

We initiated the follow-up survey 18 to 20 months after the start of each JC program (Exhibit B.2). Each survey was fielded for approximately three months.

Exhibit B.2. Follow-up survey collection dates

JC cohort	Program start date	Follow-up survey collection date
4	July 2017	March 2019–June 2019
5	January 2018	September 2019–December 2019
6	July 2018	October 2019–January 2020

3. Response rates

Despite our extensive efforts to collect surveys from all consenting participants, only 47 percent completed the follow-up survey (Exhibit B.3). As discussed above, we believe this was largely due to outdated contact information. However, it was generally not possible to distinguish between youth who had not received the follow-up survey and youth who ignored it; email and Instagram accounts might have been dormant but not canceled, phone messages might not have indicated that the participant was no longer at that number, and mail might not have been properly forwarded or returned to the sender. Only two participants directly refused to answer

31 Accurint is a LexisNexis product which allows users to retrieve data from their national database of public records including U.S. addresses and phone numbers.

the survey. For more information on the characteristics of responders relative to nonresponders, see Appendix C.

Exhibit B.3. Response rates

	Consenting participants	Number of surveys completed	Percentage complete
Cohort 4	**116**	**47**	**41**
Georgia	44	21	48
Michigan	36	17	47
South Carolina	36	9	25
Cohort 5	**112**	**51**	**46**
Georgia	37	16	43
Michigan	41	24	59
South Carolina	34	11	32
Cohort 6	**104**	**52**	**50**
Georgia	39	17	44
Michigan	44	26	59
South Carolina	21	9	43
Total	**332**	**150**	**45**

Source: BIF and follow-up survey data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a BIF. Response rates are estimated as the total number of follow-up survey respondents divided by the total number of participants who completed a BIF.

TEXT MESSAGE SURVEY

JC participants from Cohorts 5 and 6, who provided prior consent to participate in the evaluation and permission to contact them via text message, were asked to complete a brief survey administered by text messaging.[32] The survey was conducted on a monthly basis for six months, beginning 10 to 13 months after the participant started the JC program (Exhibit B.4). The brief survey was designed to provide snapshots of the progression over time the respondents make in their employment, earnings, and education between the end of the Job ChalleNGe program and the follow-up survey. For each round of collecting monthly text message data, each participant was asked to answer three to five questions tailored based on his or her circumstances. For example, participants who responded to the first question that they are not currently working did not receive the follow-up questions about hours worked and hourly pay rate at a job. During the fifth administration of the monthly text message survey, the study team also used the survey to collect updated contact information from the participants to support the follow-up survey data collection effort.

32 Fifty-four percent of study participants in Cohorts 5 and 6 consented to receiving the text message survey.

Exhibit B.4. Dates of text message survey collection

JC cohort	Program start date	Dates of text message survey collection
5	January 2018	March 2019–September 2019
6	July 2018	May 2019–November 2019

Participants eligible for the text message survey were notified of this data collection effort via mail, email, and text message. The mail and email outreach were added to improve legitimacy of the text message they received. Text messages were sent out in bulk each month using a texting vendor. Participants received the text messages from a number with an area code that was local to their JC program site. Participants had approximately two weeks to respond to the questions each month and received reminder prompts at various intervals during that window if they had not yet completed all questions. Participants were also prompted with an opportunity to opt out of all future text messages if they did not wish to continue participation. Participants who completed the survey received a $3 in Amazon.com credit each month they completed the text message survey.

Approximately 11 percent of the youth who agreed to be contacted by text completed all six rounds of the text survey (Exhibit B.5). Thirty percent of those in Cohort 6 and 27 percent of those in Cohort 5 responded to at least one round of the survey. As mentioned previously, the text survey protocol did allow participants to opt out in each round of the survey. Of the cases that did not complete any month of the text survey, 52 percent were opt-outs, and most of those cases had opted out during the first month of fielding.

Although we know which cases opted out as part of the text survey protocol, we expect that the remainder of nonresponse was due to participants blocking the messages manually through their texting application, participants ignoring messages, or the use of telephone numbers that might have changed since fielding the BIFs. In each round, before the start of survey questions, the text survey protocol asked the participant to confirm that we were contacting the correct number. In the first month of the survey, we received responses from 10 telephone numbers indicating the number was incorrect. Another 13 participants indicated the telephone number was correct but did not complete the survey questions that followed.

Exhibit B.5. Response rates of text message surveys

JC cohort	Total sample	Number of survey months completed													
		None		1		2		3		4		5		6	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
5	56	41	73%	4	7%	0	0%	1	2%	2	4%	2	4%	6	11%
6	57	40	70%	2	4%	4	7%	3	5%	1	2%	1	2%	6	11%

Note: Includes all participants who consented to receive the text message survey.

Appendix C

Adjustments for Nonconsent and Nonresponse

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The purpose of this study is to provide insights about the experiences of all YC and JC youth under the JC grants. However, for most of the quantitative analyses, data are limited to the set of youth who consented to participate in this study and, in the case of survey data, responded to the relevant survey. This appendix discusses considerations in interpreting the study results on participant characteristics, services received, and post-program outcomes as representative of all YC and JC youth. We also describe the adjustments we made to analyses to increase the generalizability of results to a broader set of youth than those for which we have data.

A. Obtaining consent and collecting background information

All analyses in this study using survey or administrative data cover only the YC participants who consented to participate in the study. Although we collected partial data on earlier cohorts from the pilot, we collected data in full for Cohorts 4–6. Over the course of YC or at JC entrance, youth received information on the study and were asked to participate in it. Youth age 18 and older were asked to sign a form consenting to participate. Youth younger than 18 were asked to provide their assent for participation, and parental consent was also required. As is common in consent-based studies, not all YC youth consented to participate in the study. For instance, some youth chose not to participate due to privacy concerns. Others faced logistical issues, such as difficulty accessing their parents for consent (for youth younger than 18). Thus, this study does not contain all youth who were eligible for study inclusion.

After obtaining consent (and assent, if needed) for each participant, the study team asked cadets to complete a background information form that collected key information on participants. Nearly all of the cadets who consented to participate in the study also completed this form. Analyses are limited to the set of participants who both consented and completed a background information form. For the purposes of this appendix, we refer to nonconsenters as anyone for whom we did not obtain consent or who did not complete the background information form.

Overall, 63 percent of YC cadets consented to participate in the study (Exhibit C.1). Consent rates were 15 percentage points higher for JC participants than for participants in the YC program only. This difference was driven by the timing of data collection, the nature of data-collection efforts for each group, and potentially by the different nature of participants in the two programs. JC consent rates were also lower in Georgia than they were in Michigan and South Carolina. This was likely because some participants in the Georgia JC program came from another YC site, which was not a JC grantee, and therefore we did not obtain consent and collect baseline data from these participants during the YC program.

Exhibit C.1. Consent rates (reported in percentages)

Program	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina[a]
Total	67	63	70	71
YC only	63	63	61	61
JC	78	64	89	86
Sample size	**1,460**	**775**	**405**	**280**

Source: Program administrative data and background information form.

Notes: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Consent rates estimated as the total number of study participants divided by the total number of program participants.

[a]South Carolina consenting participants and total participants are limited to youth who completed YC.

1. Comparison of consenters and nonconsenters

The goal of this study is to assess implementation and outcomes for all youth in the YC and JC programs under the JC grants. Nonconsent will lead to a biased analysis if consenters are not a random subset of the eligible study population and are instead somehow systematically included and are nonrepresentative of the group as a whole. In this case, our analysis would describe the experiences of consenters, but bias would limit the ability to generalize the results to the full population of youth. To assess the extent of potential bias in the sample due to nonconsent, we compared the observable characteristics of consenters and nonconsenters. To do this, we used program data the sites provided to identify the full set of youth that we would have ideally liked to include in the analysis. We compared the characteristics of consenters and nonconsenters using program data on each youth participant's cohort, age, race/ethnicity, and gender. Michigan and South Carolina programs also provided data on each cadet's pre-program court involvement, which we included in this analysis.

We matched consenting cadets from our study sample to the program data.

- For Michigan and South Carolina, we matched cadets based on name, date of birth, gender, and Social Security number (when available). To account for inconsistencies across data sources, we matched participants using a probabilistic matching algorithm. Any consenting participant who was not matched to the program data using this matching algorithm was then manually compared to program data to identify a match.
- Because South Carolina only provided program data for YC cadets who completed the program, unmatched South Carolina cadets were assumed to have not completed the program and were not included in estimates of consent rates. For Georgia, program data did not include any personally identifiable information for matching to the consent sample. Georgia cadets were therefore matched on the characteristics available in both the program data and the background information form: cohort, age, race/ethnicity, and gender. For example, if the Georgia program data noted 10 cadets in Cohort 4 who were White, 17-year-old females but data from the background information form noted only 5 cadets with these characteristics, we assumed a 50 percent consent rate among White, 17-year-old females in Georgia Cohort 4. Of the 488 total consenters in Georgia, 71 could not be directly matched to the program data

using data from their background information forms.[33] This is likely due to inconsistent reporting across data sets and missing information.[34] Therefore, the consent rate for Georgia participants by characteristics is lower than the true Georgia consent rate, as presented in Exhibit C.1.

Consistent with systematic nonconsent, we see meaningful and statistically significant differences between consenting and nonconsenting participants (Exhibit C.2). Consenters were 12 percentage points more likely than nonconsenters to be 16 years old and 11 percentage points less likely to be 18 years old. Consenting participants were also 5 percentage points more likely than nonconsenters to be White and 8 percentage points less likely to be Black. No statistically significant differences were evident in the gender or court involvement of consenters and nonconsenters. To statistically test whether the differences between consenters and nonconsenters were significant across all characteristics, we also performed a logistic regression of consent on the full set of youth characteristics. The results showed a clear difference between the characteristics of the two groups, which was statistically significant at the .01 level.

Exhibit C.3 shows the characteristics of consenters and nonconsenters at each site. Overall, the patterns found in each individual site were mostly the same as those found across the three sites combined, with some exceptions. In Michigan, consenters were a statistically significant 11 percentage points less likely than nonconsenters to be male, and in Georgia, consenters were more likely to be Black and less likely to be White. In Georgia, consent rates by cohort varied more than in the other two sites. In South Carolina, no statistically significant differences were evident between consenters and nonconsenters, but this might also have been due to smaller sample sizes.

[33] This includes both (1) participants who completed the baseline information form but for whom no one in the program data had a matching set of characteristics and (2) participants with a set of characteristics that were more common among consenters than among all cadets in the program data.

[34] Unmatched participants are more likely to be identified as Hispanic or other/mixed race ethnicity, suggesting that discrepancies may be because of inconsistent categorization of race and ethnicity across data sets.

Exhibit C.2. Baseline characteristics of consenters and nonconsenters across all sites (reported in percentages)

Characteristic	Consenters	Nonconsenters	p-value[a]
Age at YC entrance			***
16	55	43	
17	36	37	
18	9	20	
Male	80	82	
Race and ethnicity			**
Hispanic	4	2	
Non-Hispanic, Black	52	60	
Non-Hispanic, White	38	33	
Non-Hispanic, other race	6	5	
Court-involved[b]	26	30	
Cohort			***
4	39	29	
5	32	41	
6	29	30	
Sample size	**897**	**563**	

Source: Program administrative data and background information form.

Note: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6.

[a]We conducted chi-squared tests to assess the differences between consenting and nonconsenting youth. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

[b]Michigan and South Carolina only.

2. Weighting for nonconsent

To mitigate the effects of the systematic nonconsent on the analysis and the bias it might cause, we reweighted all data such that the observable characteristics of the analysis sample match the observable characteristics of the full eligible population.[35] To do this, we assigned a consent weight to each consenting participant in our data. We applied these weights for all analyses using the background information form, data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), and criminal justice administrative data. To obtain NSC and criminal justice data, we provided a list of consenting participants' personal information to data providers for matching. Therefore, the response rates for these data sets are estimated from the share of participants who consented and for whom we have adequate data for matching. We interpret any unmatched individuals as

[35] In South Carolina, this requires the additional assumption that completers and noncompleters do not differ on observable characteristics.

Exhibit C.3. Baseline characteristics of consenters and nonconsenters, by site (reported in percentages)

Characteristic	Georgia			Michigan			South Carolina		
	Consenters	Non-consenters	*p*-value[a]	Consenters	Non-consenters	*p*-value[a]	Consenters	Non-consenters	*p*-value[a]
Age at YC entrance			***			***			
16	54	42		56	44		54	48	
17	37	37		37	40		35	34	
18	9	21		7	16		11	18	
Male	83	81		76	87	**	79	83	
Race and ethnicity			**			*			
Hispanic	4	1		7	5		1	1	
Non-Hispanic, Black	71	69		19	30		60	65	
Non-Hispanic, White	21	26		67	60		33	27	
Non-Hispanic, other race	5	4		8	6		5	6	
Court-involved[b]	-	-		28	31		23	29	
Cohort			***						
4	44	22		30	41		41	44	
5	28	46		35	32		37	35	
6	28	33		35	28		22	21	
Sample size	**417**	**358**		**282**	**123**		**198**	**82**	

Source: Program administrative data and background information form.

Note: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6.

[a]We conducted chi-squared tests to assess the differences between consenting and nonconsenting youth.

[b]Michigan and South Carolina only. Data which was not available is indicated with a "-."

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

having not attended school (for NSC data) or interacted with the criminal justice system (for the justice data). Hence, we assumed a 100 percent match rate between the study's list of consenting participants and each of these two sources of administrative data.

To estimate consent weights, we assigned each participant an estimate, p_i, the probability of consent for individual *i*. To estimate p_i, we performed a logistic regression of consent on the observable characteristics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, court involvement (where available), cohort, and site. We used a fully saturated model, which means that we included indicator variables for each value of each characteristic and an indicator signaling that information about that characteristic for a participant is missing from the data. We estimated the model on the group of participants that is in the program data using the same sample we used to create the earlier exhibits in this appendix. We estimated the predicted probability of consent, p_i, as the predicted value from the logistic regression.[36] For each consenting youth participant, *i*, we then assigned a sample consent weight, w_c, as $w_{c,i} = 1 / p_i$.

We used these estimated consent weights, w_c, to reweight the study sample to reflect the observable characteristics of the full relevant participant population for all analyses based on the background information form, NSC data, and criminal justice administrative data.

B. Follow-up survey

We collected follow-up survey data for each youth participant about 18 to 20 months after the start of the JC program to provide additional information on the experiences of JC participants and on their education, employment, and criminal justice outcomes. We sent the survey by text message, email, and mail to participants who consented to participate in the study. The study team also created an Instagram account and contacted participants through that platform. We also contacted study participants who did not respond to the survey by phone.

Although we made extensive efforts to maximize survey response rates, only 44 percent of consenting participants completed the follow-up survey (Exhibit C.4). This was partially due to an inability to contact youth. Some participants did not provide contact information when they were completing the baseline information form, limiting our ability to contact them when they were due to be invited to complete their follow-up surveys. Additionally, because the follow-up survey was collected more than a year following the start of the JC program, the information on how and where to contact the youth participant was often outdated. It was often impossible to distinguish between youth who had not received the follow-up survey and youth who ignored it—email and Instagram accounts might have been dormant but not canceled, voicemail recordings might not have indicated that the participant was no longer at that number, and mail might not have been properly forwarded to the participant or returned to us. Wherever possible,

[36] For some analyses, we include data on JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who participated in YC Cohort 3. For these youth, predicted values were assigned using Cohort 4 predicted values because we did not collect data on participants in YC Cohort 3 who did not participate in the JC program.

we attempted to obtain updated contact information from sites, but in many cases this information was also outdated by the time of the follow-up survey. Only two participants whom we affirmatively contacted refused to complete the survey. The response rate was highest among Michigan participants and lowest among South Carolina participants.

Exhibit C.4. Response rates (reported in percentages)

Program	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Total	45	45	55	32
Sample size	**332**	**120**	**121**	**91**

Source: Background information form and follow-up survey data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in YC Cohorts 4–6 and JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form. Response rates are estimated as the total number of follow-up survey respondents divided by the total number of participants who completed a background information form.

1. Comparison of survey responders and nonresponders

As with nonconsent to participate in the study, nonresponse to the follow-up survey will lead to biased results if youth who responded to the survey are systematically different from those who did not respond to the survey. This could happen if, for example, participants who had a positive experience in the JC program or who were employed were more likely to respond to the survey. Although we do not have survey-based data upon which to explore differences in outcomes between survey responders and nonresponders, we can assess whether the characteristics of responders are similar to those of nonresponders using information from the background information form. Because all consenters completed the background information form, we can compare survey responders to nonresponders using a larger set of characteristics than we could use for the consent analysis.

Exhibits C.5 to C.7 show the demographic and household, education and employment, and self-reported delinquent behavior characteristics of survey responders relative to nonresponders, weighted using nonconsent weights. Across all measured characteristics, the only difference in characteristics that was statistically significant at the .05 level was in employment history. Follow-up survey responders were 11 percentage points less likely than nonresponders to have been employed directly before the YC program and 9 percentage points less likely to have ever had a paying job for three months or more. Follow-up survey responders were less likely than nonresponders to be in Cohort 4 and more likely to be in Cohorts 5 and 6, although this difference was only significant at the .1 level.

To test whether systematic differences existed between responders and nonresponders across all participant characteristics, we performed a logistic regression of response on a subset of available covariates representing key characteristics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, cohort, court involvement, history of at least three months of employment, and educational attainment (at least 10th grade and at least 11th grade). The results (not shown) indicate a difference between

responders and nonresponders that was statistically significant at the .1 level but not the .05 level.

Exhibit C.5. Baseline demographic characteristics of JC youth who responded and did not respond to the follow-up survey (reported in percentages)

Characteristic	BIF and FUS responders	BIF-only responders	*p*-value[a]
Age			
16	57	54	
17	30	36	
18	13	10	
Male	80	74	
Race and ethnicity			
Hispanic	7	10	
Non-Hispanic, Black	36	43	
Non-Hispanic, White	43	37	
Non-Hispanic, other race	13	10	
Foster care involvement[b]	0	2	
Free or reduced-price lunch status[c]	65	67	
Unstable housing[b]	5	7	
Ever received special education services	21	19	
Married	1	0	
Has a child	1	1	
Cohort			*
4	30	41	
5	39	35	
6	31	24	
Sample size	**150**	**182**	

Source: Background information form (BIF) and follow-up survey (FUS).

Notes: Analysis sample includes participants in JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the BIF.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the BIF and FUS responders and the BIF-only responders. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

[b]Foster care involvement and housing status were self-reported at the time of the BIF collection.

[c]Free and reduced-price lunch status was self-reported based on the two years prior to background information form collection.

Exhibit C.6. Baseline education and employment characteristics of JC youth who responded and did not respond to the follow-up survey (reported in percentages)

Characteristic	BIF and FUS responders	BIF-only responders	*p*-value[a]
Educational attainment			
Last grade completed in school			
8th grade or below	5	7	
9th grade	19	25	
10th grade	42	42	
11th grade	23	19	
12th grade	11	7	
High school diploma or GED	6	3	
Ever suspended	73	76	
Employment			
Employed directly before YC program	22	33	**
Ever had a paying job for 3 or more months	43	52	
Sample size	**150**	**182**	

Source: Background information form (BIF) and follow-up survey (FUS).

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in YC Cohorts 4–6 and JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the BIF.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the BIF and FUS responders and the BIF-only responders.

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Exhibit C.7. Self-reported delinquent behavior and justice system involvement of JC youth who responded and did not respond to the follow-up survey (reported percentages)

Characteristic	BIF and FUS responders	BIF-only responders	p-valuea
Used marijuana in past six months	42	47	
Used another drug in past six months	22	21	
Any court involvement	36	36	
Ever arrested or taken into custody	28	25	
Any status offense[b]	14	16	
Ever convicted	15	13	
Ever detained in a juvenile facility	9	12	
Ever detained in an adult facility	7	5	
On probation or parole at YC entrance	10	13	
Sample size	**150**	**182**	

Source: Background information form (BIF) and follow-up survey (FUS).

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in YC Cohorts 4–6 and JC Cohorts 4–6 who completed the BIF.

[a]Statistical significance is estimated using chi-squared difference tests to compare differences between the BIF and FUS responders and the BIF-only responders. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

[b]A status defense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

2. Weighting

Although the characteristics of survey responders and nonresponders were similar on many dimensions, we weighted follow-up survey data used in the outcomes analyses to account for survey nonresponse. We used a two-level weighting method to account for both nonconsent and survey nonresponse. This is designed to reweight the follow-up survey responders to have the same observable characteristics as the full eligible study population.

To generate weights for follow-up survey respondents, we first estimated r_i, the probability that JC participant i responded to the survey conditional on having consented to participate. To estimate r_i, we performed a logistic regression of a binary variable indicating survey response on observable baseline characteristics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, court involvement, history of at least three months of employment, and educational attainment. For educational attainment, we included two indicator variables signaling whether the participant had completed 10th grade and whether the participant had completed 11th grade. For all other variables, we used a fully saturated model, which means that we included indicator variables for each value of each

characteristic and an indicator signaling that information about that characteristic for the youth is missing from the data. The model was estimated on the group of consenting participants only, because they form the group of youth that we included in the follow-up survey fielding effort.

We then generated weights by estimating the overall probability of inclusion in the follow-up survey as $p_i \times r_i$, where p_i is the probability of consenting to being in the study as described in Section A of this appendix. We estimated the nonresponse weight as $w_{r,i} = 1/\left(p_i \times r_i\right)$. To ensure that results are not driven by a few outliers, we used a trimming method to cap weights. We set the maximum weight as three times the median weight value (Van de Kerckhove et al. 2014).

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Appendix D

Regression Analyses of Post-Program Outcomes

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Differences in post-program outcomes between JC and YC-only participants might be driven by differences between the characteristics of participants in each group. To provide insights about the extent to which this might be true, we performed an ordinary least squares regression analysis to estimate the differences in outcomes between the two groups after controlling for observable characteristics. It is important to note that this analysis only controls for observable characteristics and not the full set of differences between JC and YC-only participants. Therefore, the difference that remains after taking into account the observed demographic characteristics cannot be interpreted as solely due to JC participation. For example, if—even holding constant all observable characteristics—youth who are more ambitious are more likely to sign up for JC then we may observe that JC youth have higher earnings. Therefore, if we observe a positive association between JC participation and outcomes, that difference might have existed even in the absence of JC so therefore does not represent the effect of JC.

We estimated the following regression model of outcomes on JC participation:

$$(1) \quad Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 JC_i + \gamma X_i + \varepsilon_i ,$$

where Y_i is the outcome measure based on administrative data (a measure of educational engagement or contact with the justice system) for each participant *i* and *JC* is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 for YC participants who participate in JC and 0 for YC participants who do not. *X* is a vector of covariates from the background information form, including the following characteristics: gender, age, race, YC cohort, court involvement before YC, educational attainment before YC, free or reduced price-lunch receipt before YC, history of special education, stable housing before YC, site, and YC cohort. ε_i is an individual-specific error term. We used a fully saturated model, which means that we included indicator variables for each value of each characteristic and an indicator signaling that information about that characteristic for a YC participant is missing from the data. In this model, β_1 is the mean difference in the outcome measure between JC participants and YC participants after taking into account differences across youth in the other characteristics included in the model.

Exhibit D.1 shows the results of the regressions of educational outcomes on JC participation, controlling for observable characteristics of the youth. Exhibit D.2 shows similar regression results for criminal justice outcomes.

Exhibit D.1. Regression-adjusted differences between educational outcomes of JC youth and YC-only youth

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	*p*-value
Enrollment in school			
Within six months of YC	0.57	0.030	***
One year following YC	0.01	0.021	
Two years following YC[a]	-0.04	0.024	*
Enrolled in two-year college			
Within six months of YC	0.58	0.030	***
One year following YC	0.02	0.020	
Two years following YC[a]	-0.05	0.021	**
Enrolled in four-year college			
Within six months of YC	-0.01	0.004	**
One year following YC	-0.01	0.007	
Two years following YC[a]	0.00	0.014	
Enrolled in private institution			
Within six months of YC	0.00	0.003	*
One year following YC	0.00	0.004	
Two years following YC[a]	0.01	0.012	
Obtained certification[b]			
Within six months of YC	0.19	0.026	***
Any time following YC[c]	0.42	0.037	***

Source: National Student Clearinghouse sample weighted data (N = 984).

Notes: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6.

[a]Outcomes calculated two years following YC do not include YC Cohort 6.

[b]Degree data were not available for Michigan participants. Sample is limited to Georgia and South Carolina.

[c]Data collected through October 2019.

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Exhibit D.2. Regression-adjusted differences between criminal justice outcomes of JC youth and YC-only youth

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	*p*-value
Arrested for a new offense			
One year following YC	-0.05	0.020	**
Any time following YC	-0.06	0.027	**
Convicted for a new offense			
One year following YC	-0.01	0.014	
Any time following YC	-0.01	0.017	
Drug offense			
One year following YC	-0.01	0.005	
Any time following YC	-0.01	0.006	
Violent offense			
One year following YC	0.00	0.006	
Any time following YC	0.00	0.008	
Property crime			
One year following YC	0.00	0.010	
Any time following YC	0.00	0.011	
Public order crime			
One year following YC	0.00	0.009	
Any time following YC	-0.01	0.013	

Source: Criminal justice weighted administrative data (N = 984).

Note: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Criminal justice involvement rates represent the share of participants with a criminal justice event any time following the YC program. YC program end dates were considered to be May 31, 2017, for Cohort 4; December 31, 2018, for Cohort 5; and May 31, 2018, for Cohort 6. Criminal justice data were collected through June 2019 for South Carolina, November 2019 for Michigan, and December 2019 for Georgia.

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

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Appendix E

Grantee-Level Results

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For the primary analyses in this study, we present results pooled across all three grantees. However, the experiences of youth in the YC and JC programs were not uniform. The grantees differed in participant characteristics, program components, staff characteristics, and local economic conditions. In this appendix, we present the results of key analyses by grantee.

Exhibit E.1. Baseline characteristics of YC youth, by grantee (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit II.2)

Characteristic	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Age			
16 (or younger)	50	58	52
17	38	33	34
18	12	8	14
Male	82	76	79
Race and ethnicity			
Hispanic	8	12	4
Non-Hispanic, Black	64	17	53
Non-Hispanic, White	20	60	31
Non-Hispanic, other race	8	10	13
Foster care involvement[a]	1	2	1
Free and reduced-price lunch status[b]	78	60	73
Housing status[a]			
Stable housing	96	96	96
Unstable housing	4	4	4
Ever received special education services	15	25	25
Married	1	0	0
Has a child	4	2	2
Sample size	**488**	**282**	**214**

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form.

[a]Foster care involvement and housing status were self-reported at the time of the background information form collection.

[b]Free lunch status self-reported based on the two years prior to background information form collection.

Exhibit E.2. Baseline education and employment characteristics of YC youth, by grantee (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit II.3)

Characteristic	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Educational attainment			
Last grade completed in school			
8th grade or below	10	5	4
9th grade	26	25	24
10th grade	39	41	41
11th grade	21	23	27
12th grade	4	5	3
High school diploma or GED	3	1	1
Ever suspended	78	78	88
Employment			
Employed directly before YC program	28	28	29
Ever had a paying job for 3 or more months	41	46	47
Sample size	**488**	**282**	**214**

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form.

Exhibit E.3. Self-reported delinquent behavior and justice system involvement of YC youth at the time of enrollment, by grantee (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit II.4)

Characteristic	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Used marijuana in past six months	54	58	47
Used another drug in past six months	23	27	18
Any court involvement	43	37	39
Ever arrested or taken into custody	33	24	26
Any status offense[a]	18	22	17
Ever convicted	19	17	20
Ever detained in a juvenile facility	19	11	16
Ever detained in an adult facility	7	3	5
On probation or parole at YC entrance	15	12	14
Sample size	**488**	**282**	**214**

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Notes: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form.

[a]A status defense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

Exhibit E.4. Baseline characteristics of YC youth overall and by JC participation (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit III.2)

	Georgia		Michigan		South Carolina	
Characteristic	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**
Age						
16	53	40	57	61	53	51
17	36	43	38	25	34	32
18	11	16	5	14	12	16
Male	83	78	77	75	81	76
Race and ethnicity						
Hispanic	8	9	13	11	5	2
Non-Hispanic, Black	64	63	18	16	59	44
Non-Hispanic, White	19	21	59	62	25	38
Non-Hispanic, other race	9	7	10	11	10	16
Foster care involvement[a]	1	2	2	1	1	1
Free and reduced-price lunch status[b]	79	73	61	59	75	70
Housing status[a]						
Stable housing	96	94	97	95	97	95
Unstable housing	4	6	3	5	3	5
Ever received special education services	15	14	23	27	27	22
Married	1	0	0	0	0	1
Has a child	6	0	3	0	3	1
Educational attainment						
Last grade completed in school						
8th grade or below	11	6	6	5	2	7
9th grade	28	20	25	26	25	22
10th grade	38	44	41	41	42	40
11th grade	19	25	23	22	27	27
12th grade	4	4	4	7	3	4
High school diploma or GED	2	6	1	2	1	0
Employment	80	69	85	67	87	90
Employed directly before YC program	28	28	26	31	27	32
Ever had a paying job for 3 or more months	41	41	47	46	44	52
Sample size	**383**	**105**	**174**	**108**	**123**	**91**

Source: Background information form weighted data.

Note: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form.

[a]Foster care involvement and housing status self-reported at the time of the background information form collection.

[b]Free lunch status self-reported based on the two years prior to background information form collection.

Exhibit E.5. Self-reported delinquent behavior and justice system involvement of YC youth at the time of enrollment overall and by JC participation (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit III.3)

	Georgia		Michigan		South Carolina	
Characteristic	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**
Used marijuana in past six months	58	40	62	51	51	42
Used another drug in past six months	25	15	28	27	17	19
Any court involvement	45	37	41	33	40	38
Ever arrested or taken into custody	33	32	24	24	27	25
Any status offense[a]	20	11	25	19	18	16
Ever convicted	20	14	21	12	21	19
Ever detained in a juvenile facility	21	12	12	10	19	13
Ever detained in an adult facility	6	9	2	4	5	6
On probation or parole at YC entrance	15	13	12	11	15	12
Sample size	**383**	**105**	**174**	**108**	**123**	**91**

Source: Background information form weighted data

Notes: Analysis includes all youth in YC Cohorts 4–6 who completed a background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]A status defense is defined as a noncriminal act that is a violation of the law for minors. Examples include running away from home and underage use of alcohol.

Exhibit E.6. Employment outcomes at follow-up for JC participants (reported in percentages unless otherwise noted) (pooled results in Exhibit VI.5)

Employment outcomes	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Employed following program			
At JC exit	47	59	42
At follow-up survey	83	79	79
Average weekly earnings (dollars)[a]	378	423	317
Average hours per week (hours)[a]	31	34	33
Sample size	54	67	29

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data. The follow-up survey was administered 16 to 23 months after youth started the JC program.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6.

[a]Average earnings and hours are calculated across all participants. Participants who were not currently employed were assigned a value of zero for both earnings and hours.

Exhibit E.7. Employment characteristics among those employed at follow-up (pooled results in Exhibit VI.6)

Employment outcomes	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Average weekly earnings (dollars)	455	537	403
Average hours per week (hours)	38	44	42
Job provides fringe benefits (percentage)	72	61	70
Average job tenure (weeks)	8	9	10
Sample size	**46**	**51**	**22**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data. The follow-up survey was administered 16 to 23 months after youth started the JC program.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who reported being employed at the time of the follow-up survey.

Exhibit E.8. Education outcomes for JC and YC only participants (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit VI.16)

	Georgia		Michigan		South Carolina	
Educational outcome	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**
Enrollment in school						
Within six months of YC	9	49	6	84	9	77
One year following YC	8	10	6	11	11	8
Two years following YC[a]	10	5	16	11	7	7
Enrolled in two-year college						
Within six months of YC	7	49	5	84	9	77
One year following YC	6	9	5	11	8	7
Two years following YC[a]	8	2	15	11	4	4
Obtained certification[b]						
Within six months of YC	0	17	-	-	1	31
Any time following YC	2	40	-	-	4	53
Sample size	383	105	174	108	123	91

Source: National Student Clearinghouse sample weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Outcomes with very low probabilities were not included in this table due to small sample sizes.

[a]Outcomes calculated two years following YC do not include YC Cohort 6.

[b]Certification data were not available for Michigan participants. Sample is limited to Georgia and South Carolina.

Exhibit E.9. Criminal justice outcomes for JC and YC only participants (reported in percentages) (pooled results in Exhibit 6.17)

	Georgia		Michigan		South Carolina	
Criminal justice outcome	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**	**YC only**	**JC**
Arrested for a new offense						
One year following YC	18	8	7	8	10	8
Any time during follow-up	35	19	14	15	17	12
Convicted for a new offense						
One year following YC	4	2	5	8	6	5
Any time during follow-up	8	4	10	12	6	5
Sample size	**383**	**105**	**174**	**108**	**123**	**91**

Source: Criminal justice weighted administrative data.

Note: Analysis sample includes participants in YC Cohorts 4–6. Rates represent the share of participants with a criminal justice event any time following the YC program. YC program end dates were considered to be May 31, 2017, for Cohort 4; December 31, 2018, for Cohort 5; and May 31, 2018, for Cohort 6. Criminal justice data were collected through June 2019 for South Carolina, November 2019 for Michigan, and December 2019 for Georgia.

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Appendix F

Survey Estimates of Criminal Justice Outcomes

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To supplement the administrative data on criminal justice outcomes, we also collected self-reports of criminal justice outcomes through the follow-up survey. The follow-up survey contains data from participants collected for Cohorts 4, 5, and 6 beginning 18 to 20 months after the start of JC. This appendix presents the results of the follow-up survey questions related to criminal justice outcomes. Although these results provide interesting details on the characteristics of youth interactions with the criminal justice system, it is important to interpret these results with caution. First, youth might be reluctant to accurately report results on their own criminal justice involvement, either because of embarrassment or fear of repercussions. Second, youth might not be fully aware of the legal details of their cases or might accidentally misrepresent certain aspects of their situation. Finally, if youth are incarcerated or otherwise consumed by the justice system, they might have been unable to respond to the survey. Despite these limitations, results from the follow-up survey are close to estimates from the criminal justice administrative data on arrests (15 percent versus 16 percent, respectively) and convictions (6 percent versus 7 percent, respectively).

Exhibit F.1. Self-reported criminal justice outcomes for JC participants (reported in percentages)

Criminal justice outcome	Percentage
Arrested for a new offense	15
Convicted for a new offense	6
Convicted of a felony offense	4
Sentenced to incarceration	6
Sample size	**150**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6.

Exhibit F.2. Self-reported charges associated with arrests and convictions for JC participants (reported in percentages)

Charge	Percentage arrested	Percentage convicted
Drug possession	3	2
Selling or manufacturing of drugs	0	0
Driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated	0	0
Failure to pay child support	0	0
Property offense	6	4
Violent offense	2	1
Other	2	1
Sample size	**150**	**150**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6. Not all respondents who reported having been arrested reported the associated charge.

Exhibit F.3. Self-reported sentences for JC participants (reported in percentages)

Sentence	Percentage
Fines	6
Loss of driver's license	1
Mandated community services	2
Probation	6
Parole	0
Sample size	**150**

Source: Follow-up survey weighted data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes JC participants in Cohorts 4–6.

Appendix G

Participant Outcomes Using Grantee-Defined Measures of Court Involvement

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In this appendix, we examine whether key results are sensitive to the definition of court involvement. The analysis in the main body of the report uses a measure of court involvement constructed from information that youth self-reported on the background information form.[37] Using the background information form enables us to have a well-defined and consistent definition across sites. Using this approach, we find that 41 percent of participants have court involvement, as shown in Exhibit G.1. An alternative approach would be to use the indicators of court involvement that sites provided in the administrative program data. Michigan and South Carolina provided court-involvement indicators for all YC participants, while Georgia only indicated court involvement for JC participants. Using site definitions, 30 percent of participants are found to have court involvement.

Exhibit G.2 shows the share of youth who are categorized as court-involved under each definition. Overall, 75 percent of youth were categorized consistently across the two definitions. Nine percent of youth were categorized as court-involved according to the site definitions but not according to the study definition. This might reflect differences in what was considered court-involved or youth's underreporting of involvement in the criminal justice system. Likewise, 16 percent of participants were categorized as court-involved according to the study definitions but not according to site definitions.

Exhibit G.1. Court-involvement rates, by definition and site (reported in percentages)

Source of court-involvement	Total	Georgia	Michigan	South Carolina
Study defined court-involved[a]	41	44	37	39
Sample size	963	477	278	208
Site defined court-involved[b]	30	56	27	23
Sample size	555	78	292	185

Source: Background information form weighted data and program administrative data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who completed the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement by the study definition if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]Analysis limited to participants with a nonmissing indicator of court involvement using the study definition.

[b]Analysis limited to participants with a nonmissing indicator of court involvement using the site definition.

[37] Youth were categorized as having court involvement by the study definition if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

Exhibit G.2. Comparison of court-involvement rates, by definition (reported in percentages)

Source of court-involvement	Site court- involved	Site not court- involved
Study defined court-involved	21	16
Study defined not court-involved	9	54

Source: Background information form weighted data and program administrative data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who completed the background information form and had nonmissing indicators of court involvement by both definitions. Youth were categorized as having court involvement by the study definition if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

To illustrate the impact of these differences, we estimate the key outcomes by court involvement using the site definition (Exhibit G.3). Many differences in outcomes between court-involved participants and not court-involved participants are larger according to the study definitions than the site definition. For example, there is a 14 percent difference in post-program arrests between court-involved and not court-involved participants but only a 2 percentage point difference by the site difference.

Exhibit G.3. Select JC participant outcomes, by court involvement (reported in percentages unless otherwise specified)

Outcomes	Study definition[a]		Site definition[b]	
	Court-involved	Not court-involved	Court-involved	Not court-involved
Education				
Received any college credit[c]	70	78	74	79
Currently enrolled in college[c]	4	10	6	8
Currently enrolled in any courses[d]	22	30	21	29
Employment				
Currently working[d]	78	82	85	81
Average weekly earnings[d]	394	374	391	361
Average weekly earnings conditional on working[d]	508	456	462	446
Military				
Currently enlisted[d]	10	16	4	17
Any productive activity[d]	81	88	85	86
Crime and delinquent activity				
Arrested[e]	25	11	16	14
Convicted[e]	13	4	14	8
Sample size (NSC and CJ)	103	194	46	144
Sample size (FUS)	53	95	39	74

Source: Background information form weighted data and program administrative data.

Notes: Analysis sample includes YC participants in Cohorts 4–6 who completed the background information form. Youth were categorized as having court involvement by the study definition if at baseline they reported ever being arrested, found guilty of a status offense, convicted of a crime, spent time in a juvenile or adult detention facility, or if they were on probation or parole at the time of entering YC.

[a]Analysis limited to participants with a nonmissing indicator of court involvement using the study definition.

[b]Analysis limited to participants with a nonmissing indicator of court involvement using the site definition.

[c]Source: National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) weighted data. Reflects outcomes two years following YC completion.

[d]Source: Follow-up survey (FUS) weighted data.

[e]Source: Criminal justice (CJ) administrative weighted data. Reflects arrests and convictions any time following YC completion.

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