

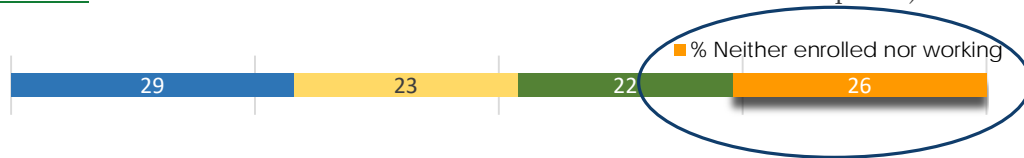
Those Neither in College nor Work the First Fall after Graduation: Earnings and Livable Wages after Six Years

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This brief is the fourth in BEREC's *Launching into Adulthood series*, which examines the trajectories of Baltimore graduates six years later. A partnership with Baltimore's Promise and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System made it possible to examine both college and earnings outcomes for Baltimore City Public Schools graduates. We chose a single class, graduates in 2009, to examine college experiences and workforce activity.

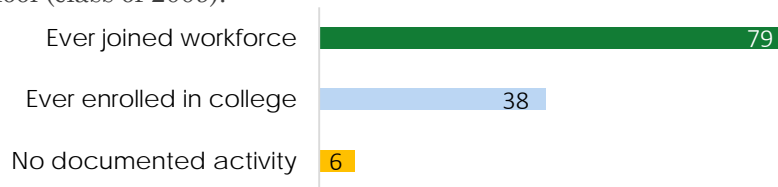
In this brief we focus on the 26% of City Schools graduates who were not enrolled in a college nation-wide and were not found working for a Maryland employer during the fall after high school. (As this group was identified by virtue of their absence from the data sources, we encourage the reader to [read the methods section for more detail](#) about what the data source includes and what it does not capture.)



Graduates Neither in College nor Working the Fall after High School

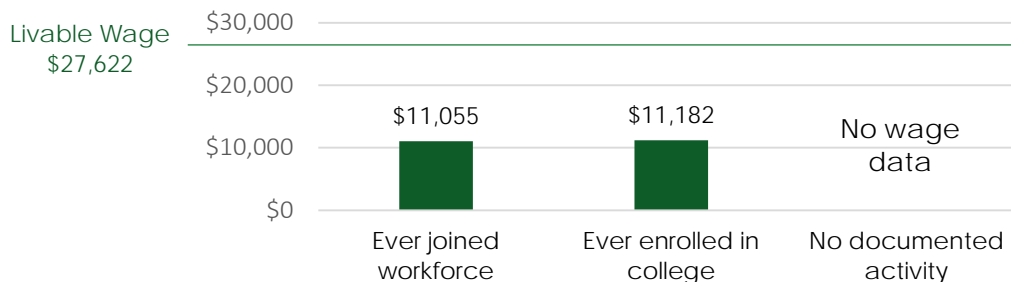
The data for this group show that while they may not have immediately enrolled in college, 38% enrolled at some point over six years, on average waiting two years to enroll. About two-thirds enrolled in a 2-year college. About 79% had a record of working in Maryland, although they may not have been consistently employed. These two former groups are not mutually exclusive, though, as some of those who enrolled also worked. Finally, after six years, 6% had still not appeared in either college enrollment or Maryland wage data. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Activities over six years for graduates who were neither enrolled nor working during the fall after high school (class of 2009).



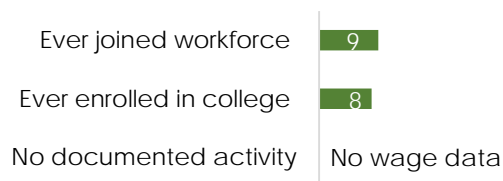
Earnings. Of graduates who eventually earned wages from a Maryland employer, their median annual income in year six was \$11,055. (See Figure 2.) For those who enrolled in college during this time, by year six median annual income was \$11,182. Finally, 15% were not found in the wage data during year six; thus their median annual income cannot be determined.

Figure 2. Median annual earnings in year six for graduates neither enrolled nor working in the fall after high school (class of 2009).



Livable Wage. Approximately 9% of the subgroup who later worked for a Maryland employer earned a [livable wage](#) in year six. Among those who ever enrolled in college, 8% earned a livable wage that year. For those with no documented activity in college or the Maryland workforce over year six, the percent who earned a livable wage is unknown. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Percent earning a livable wage in year six among graduates who were neither enrolled nor working during the fall after high school (class of 2009).



Conclusions

These findings suggest that a relationship exists between graduates’ activities the fall after high school and their earnings six years later. Compared to those [who immediately enrolled in a 4-year college](#), among whom 20% earned a livable wage, less than half as many not working or enrolled that fall earned a livable wage six years later. Additional research is needed to understand this group’s experiences in the workforce, as their six-year earnings are disconcertingly low. Questions arise regarding their workforce attachment and employment stability, as well as the quality of job opportunities available to them.

Of the 38% of this cohort who eventually enrolled in college, a small handful completed a degree within six years (results not shown). National research has also found that graduates who delay enrollment are less likely than immediate enrollees to complete a degree.ⁱ Further research is required to identify factors that prevented City Schools graduates who did enroll from enrolling sooner, to better set these graduates on a path to success.

Comparisons are difficult to obtain to put these findings into context. However, one recent studyⁱⁱ of a nationally representative 9th grade cohort looked three years after high school graduation and found that 6% were not in the labor force, and another 8% were unemployed. Compared to those who were working or enrolled in college, that study found that youth who were unemployed or not in the labor force were more likely to identify as racial minority, have parents with a high school diploma or less, and a cumulative high school GPA of less than 2.50.

For details about the data source and methodology [see *Launching into Adulthood Methodology* brief](#).

We are grateful for support from Baltimore’s Promise, which allowed BERC to complete this research.

ⁱ Bozick, R., & DeLuca, S. (2005). Better late than never? Delayed enrollment in the high school to college transition. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 531-554.

ⁱⁱ Radford, A.W., Fritch, L.B., Leu, K., Duprey, M. (2018). High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL: 09) Second Follow-Up: A First Look at Fall 2009 Ninth-Graders in 2016. NCES 2018-139. National Center for Education Statistics.