

Launching into Adulthood: Data Sources and Methodology

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This brief provides details about the data source and methodology used in the Launching into Adulthood research series.

Data Sources

This research was conducted using de-identified individual-level data from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) and with the technical support of the MLDS Center Staff. Data were prepared October 2017. The conclusions of this research do not reflect the opinion of the State of Maryland, MLDS Center, the MLDS Governing Board, or its partner agencies.

College Enrollment. MLDS sources of college enrollment data included the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). MHEC provides dates of enrollment and degree completion at institutions of higher education within the state of Maryland. The NSC reports dates of enrollment and degrees completed at postsecondary institutions across the United States. NSC data represent 98% of enrollments at U.S. Title IV-eligible and degree-granting institutions. Enrollments at some types of colleges may be underrepresented in NSC data, particularly small religious schools, arts conservatories, or small specialty colleges.

Employment. The MLDS provided data from the Maryland Department of Licensing and Labor Regulations, specifically, quarterly records of gross wages earned from employers and businesses in Maryland, as well as work study opportunities in college. Full-time and part-time employment intensity is not reported. Wage data do not include military pay, federal employment, self-employment, informal labor, or employment outside Maryland.

Student and School Characteristics. MLDS provided data reported by Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) to the Maryland State Department of Education in annual attendance accountability files. All student and school data reflect that recorded in the year of high school completion. Student data points include high school identifiers, diploma date, race, gender, free and reduced-price meal eligibility, and special education service receipt. High school type classifications reflect [City Schools' Choice Guide](#) typology.

Methodology

Analyses employed data pertaining to school year 2008-09 through June 2015.

Fall Enrollment. Fall enrollment status was determined by comparing students' high school graduation date with date of college enrollment. Fall enrollments were defined as enrollment events from July through December of the same calendar year during which high school graduation occurred. Students who graduated from high school outside the typical June graduation window are designated as fall enrollees if they were enrolled in college the next fall, regardless of whether they enrolled in college during an earlier season. Enrollment intensity (full-time, part-time, etc.) is not consistently reported by all colleges, so all enrollment events are treated equally in the analyses.

Degree Completion. Degree completion was determined using college-reported graduation events. Degree type was defined by colleges' reported credential earned, or absent that, they were inferred from level of the institution at which a graduation event was indicated (i.e., community colleges or 4-year degree-granting universities).

Earnings. Median annual earnings after six years are the sum of gross reported wages over the four quarters of the sixth fiscal year after high school graduation. All earnings results exclude individuals with

no salary (i.e., no zero dollar amounts affect median estimates). To account for inflation, all wage dollars were adjusted to 2017 dollars.

Livable Wage. The livable wage threshold refers to an amount estimated to be adequate for one adult with no dependents in the household living in Baltimore city, though this scenario may not be applicable for all City Schools graduates. The livable wage threshold is intended to be representative a locality's basic costs and taxes only. Basic needs are considered to be food, housing, health insurance, transportation, and other basic items. It does *not* account for entertainment, vacations, savings, or capital costs, such as owning a home or retirement. As such, a livable wage is preferable to the federal poverty threshold, but it is still the minimum required for subsistence without social or government assistance (Retrieved from <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/24510>).

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