Ohio Department of Job and Family Services · Office of Workforce Development
Ohio Education Research Center · The Ohio State University

WIOA Adult Program: Pre & Post Participant Outcomes

A Look at Employment and Earnings for Ohio Job Seekers, 2022–2024

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Department of Job & Family Services

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a federal law that funds job training and employment services for job seekers across the United States. In Ohio, these services are delivered locally through OhioMeansJobs centers, which operate in every county.

Who the Program Serves

The program is open to any adult, but gives priority to people facing the greatest barriers to steady work. Among the 13,464 participants studied:

Low income **82%**
Minority (defined below) **60%**
Female **51%**
SNAP recipient **31%**
Ex-offender **12%**

Each 2-6%: Single-Parent, Veteran, Has a Disability, and Homeless. Categories overlap, so one person can be counted in several. Minority is defined as "Not Non-Hispanic White"

What the Services Look Like

Participants may receive career counseling, help building a résumé, job placement assistance, or funding toward occupational training and industry credentials. Some finish in weeks; others stay enrolled for a year or more.

Key Terms

WIOA Adult Program — Federally funded job-training and employment services for adults 18 and older who are authorized to work.
Employment Rate — The share of program-leavers who were working two quarters after they exited.
Median Earnings — The middle earnings figure for program-leavers who were working in the second quarter after exit — half earned more, half earned less.
Credential — A nationally recognized degree or certificate showing training, knowledge, or skill.

Research Questions

1. **Do employment, earnings, and credential outcomes improve after participants complete the WIOA Adult program?**
2. **Do those improvements differ across groups, such as gender, income, or disability status?**

The Program at a Glance

13,464 participants studied
Millions of records cleaned and analyzed
6 years of data tracked

Behind the Data

No single file can answer these questions. This analysis links three separate Ohio state data sources, connecting each participant's program record to what they actually earned before and after.

The Three Data Sources

Program records — who enrolled, when they started, and when they left.
Wage records — what each person earned each quarter, reported by employers.
Employer records — industry and location context for those employers.

Who Is Included

This poster covers 13,464 Ohio WIOA Adult participants who enrolled between 2022 and 2024 and have since left the program. People still enrolled are excluded, because their outcomes are not yet observable.

How Outcomes Are Measured

We compare each person to themselves over time — whether they were working, and what they earned, in the quarters before enrolling versus the quarters after leaving. Outcomes are tracked up to 2 years before entry and 1 year after exit.

The Reality of Administrative Data

A large majority of the effort behind this poster went into structuring and refactoring the data for analysis, not the final analysis itself. The source records were relatively clean, but these systems were built to run programs and pay claims, not to answer research questions, so the data had to be reshaped, linked across sources, and organized into a form suited for measuring outcomes.

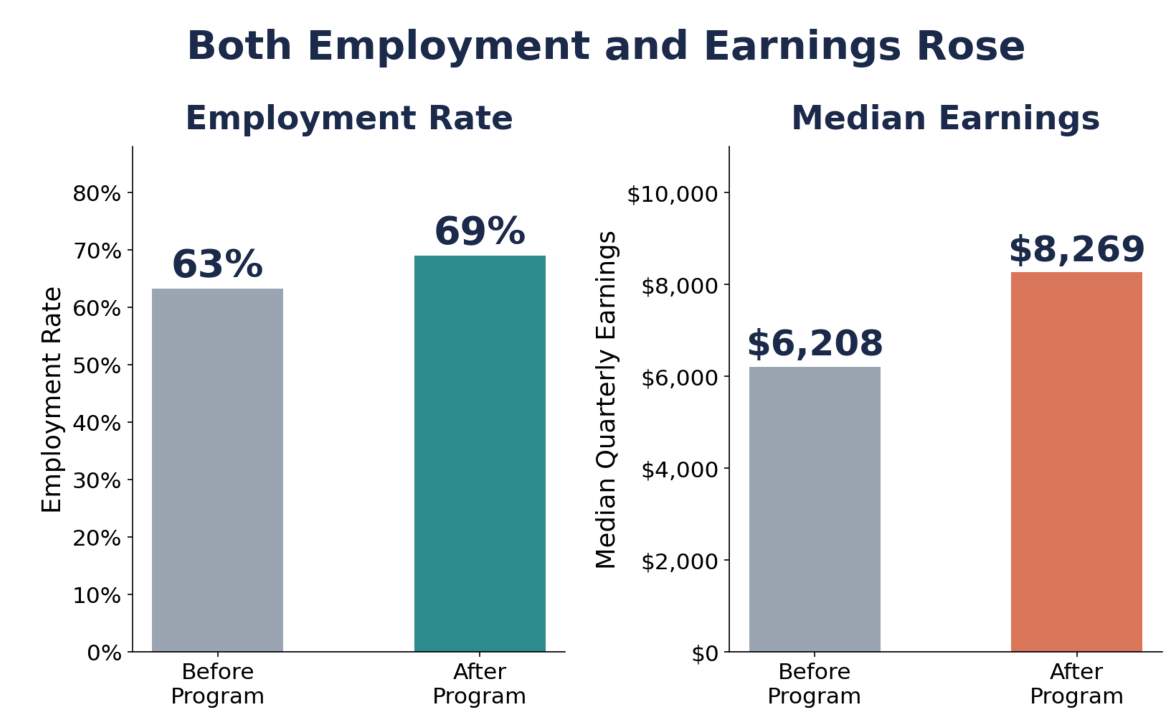
Data Quality Wins

While refactoring the data, I ran into a lot of bugs. I was able to catch duplicate program records that were inflating participant counts and corrected the logic that chose which record to keep. Additionally, I caught a mismatched data field that had inflated wage figures roughly 100 times over, and found and fixed before it reached this poster.

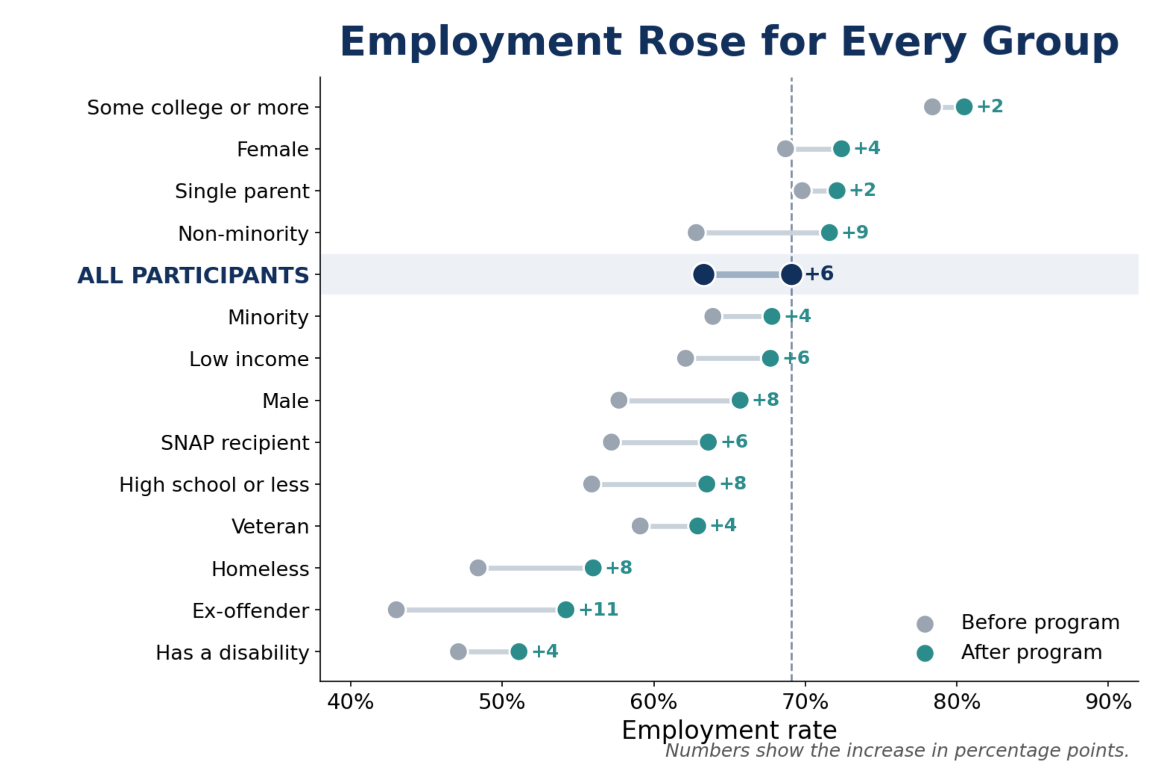
By the Numbers: Data Cleaning

100x — the size of the wage error caught before publication
4.5 → 1 records per person after finding camouflaged deduplication bug

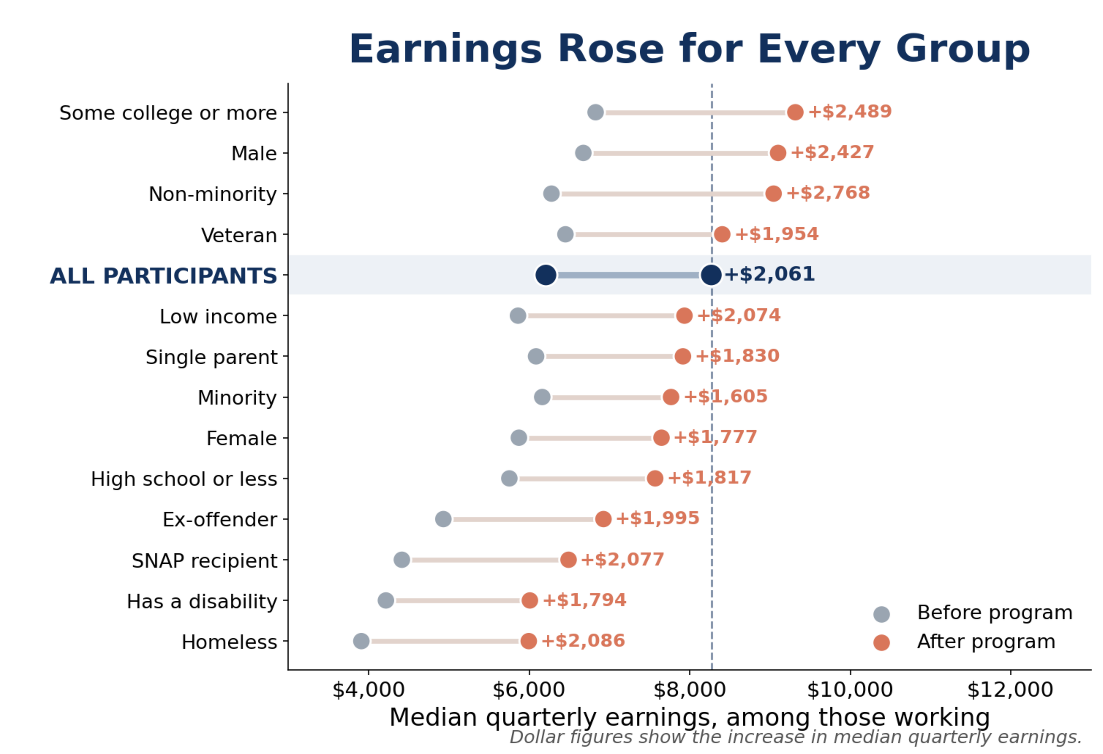
What We Found



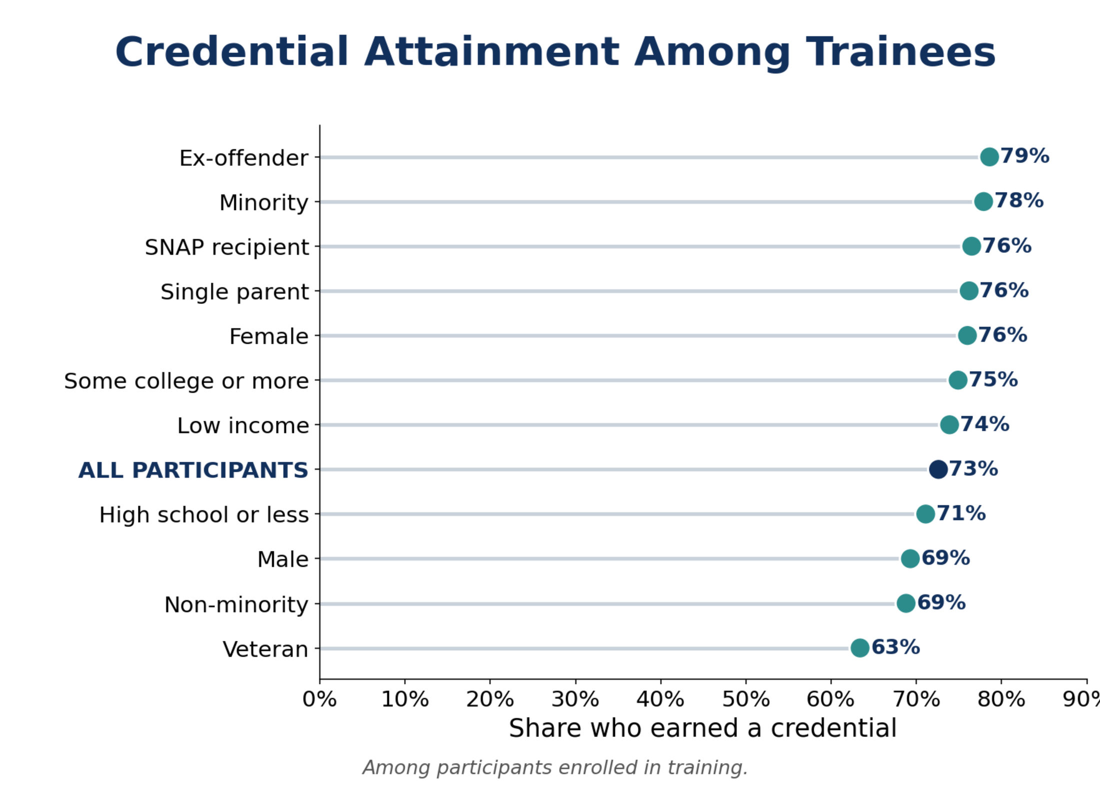
Across everyone, employment and earnings both rose after the program.



Every group improved, but the order barely changed.



Earnings rose everywhere, yet the gaps between groups remained.



Credential attainment varies widely from group to group.

69% employed after leaving the program

+33% increase in median quarterly earnings

73% of training-enrolled participants earned a credential

What This Means

- Employment rose from 63% to 69% after the program.
- Median quarterly earnings rose 33%, from about $6,200 to about $8,300.
- Every group improved, but groups that started behind generally stayed behind.

Employment figures are measured from Ohio UI wage records and run a few percentage points below official rates, since they don't capture federal jobs, out-of-state work, or self-employment.

Next Steps

We are building a statistical matching process, called propensity score matching, to compare participants against a similar group of people who did not go through the program. This will let us estimate the statistical significance of the program's effect to better understand how much of the change was caused by the program.

The matching code is started but not yet complete. It is the next phase of this project.

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In collaboration with the John Glenn College of Public Affairs and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Workforce Development.