

Boot camps (vs. confinement in state institutions)

Juvenile Justice

Benefit-cost estimates updated December 2023. Literature review updated April 2018.

Current estimates replace old estimates. Numbers will change over time as a result of model inputs and monetization methods.

The WSIPP benefit-cost analysis examines, on an apples-to-apples basis, the monetary value of programs or policies to determine whether the benefits from the program exceed its costs. WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies has three main steps. First, we determine "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Second, we calculate whether the benefits of a program exceed its costs. Third, we estimate the risk of investing in a program by testing the sensitivity of our results. For more detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#).

Program Description: Juvenile boot camps are typically implemented as an alternative to detention for adjudicated youth classified as low to moderate risk, with no previous felony or sexual offenses. Boot camps are short-term residential programs that mimic military basic training with a rigid daily schedule that may include education, work programs, physical training, counseling, and military department and ceremony. Youth are placed into platoons and are expected to improve personal- and team-accountability throughout the course of their training. Typically, youth receive instruction from specially trained correctional officers and full-time counselors, many with military experience.

In the included studies, the average length of stay in boot camp was five months, with up to six months of intensive supervision in the community where youth receive aftercare services (e.g., substance use treatment). In the studies in our analysis that reported demographic information, 61% of participants were youth of color and 4% were female.

In the included studies, the comparison groups were made up of similar youth who were detained in a juvenile facility for a similar length of time. Comparison group youth did not receive formal aftercare as a component of their probation.

Benefit-Cost Summary Statistics Per Participant

Benefits to:

Taxpayers	\$106	Benefit to cost ratio	n/a
Participants	\$13	Benefits minus costs	\$5,539
Others	\$309	Chance the program will produce	
Indirect	\$1,737	benefits greater than the costs	61%
Total benefits	\$2,164		
Net program cost	\$3,374		
Benefits minus cost	\$5,539		

The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2022). The chance the benefits exceed the costs are derived from a Monte Carlo risk analysis. The details on this, as well as the economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	Treatment age	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis						Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
				First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated				
				ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Crime	17	5	1099	-0.003	0.125	18	-0.003	0.125	26	-0.003	0.980

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates Per Participant

Affected outcome:	Resulting benefits: ¹	Benefits accrue to:					Total
		Taxpayers	Participants	Others ²	Indirect ³		
Crime	Criminal justice system	\$101	\$0	\$301	\$51		\$453
Crime	Labor market earnings associated with high school graduation	\$6	\$15	\$8	\$0		\$29
Crime	Costs of higher education	(\$1)	(\$2)	(\$1)	(\$1)		(\$5)
Program cost	Adjustment for deadweight cost of program	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,687		\$1,687
Totals		\$106	\$13	\$309	\$1,737		\$2,164

¹In addition to the outcomes measured in the meta-analysis table, WSIPP measures benefits and costs estimated from other outcomes associated with those reported in the evaluation literature. For example, empirical research demonstrates that high school graduation leads to reduced crime. These associated measures provide a more complete picture of the detailed costs and benefits of the program.

²"Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance.

³"Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the net changes in the value of a statistical life and net changes in the deadweight costs of taxation.

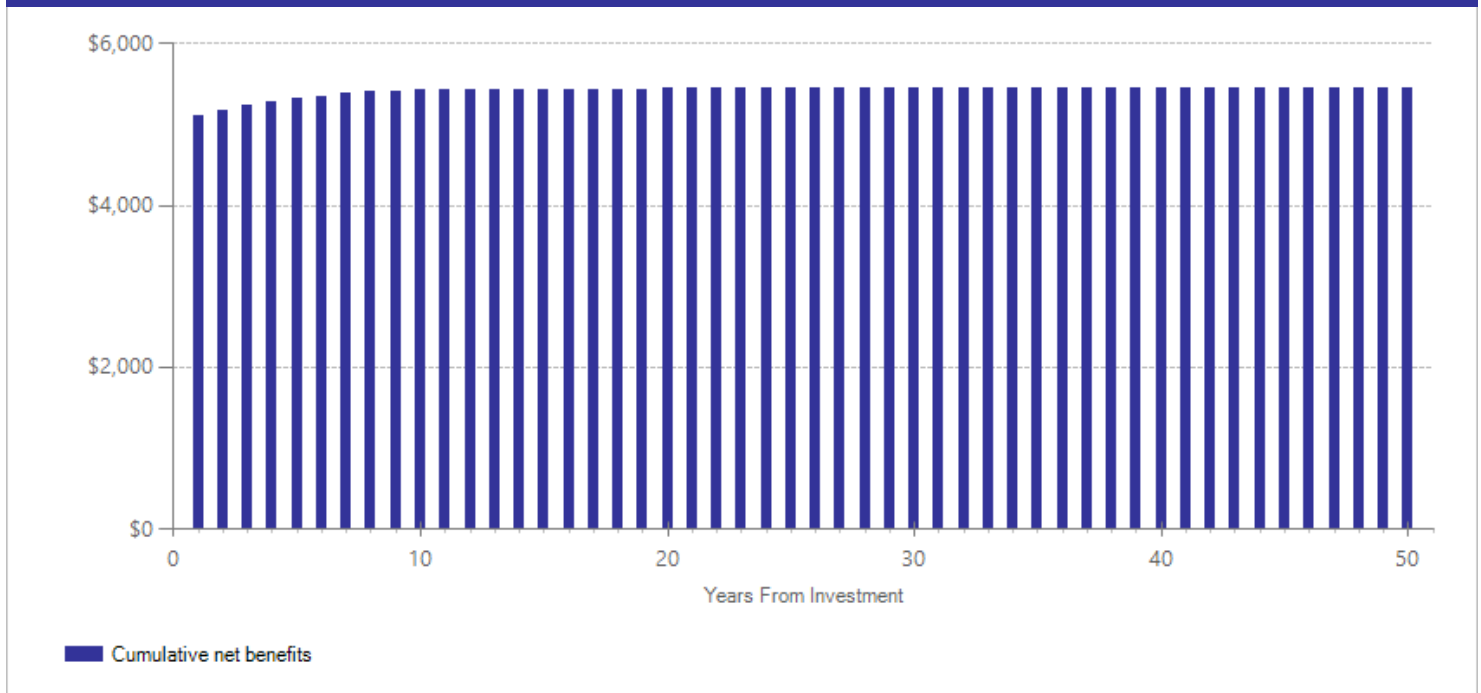
Detailed Annual Cost Estimates Per Participant

	Annual cost	Year dollars	Summary	
Program costs	\$14,406	2015	Present value of net program costs (in 2022 dollars)	\$3,374
Comparison costs	\$17,238	2015	Cost range (+ or -)	150%

We estimate the per-participant cost of boot camps using the cost of Washington's Juvenile Offender Basic Training Camp (JOBTC) (Barnoski, 2004). Treatment cost is based on per-participant annual operating and capital costs for JOBTC in fiscal year 2015, its final year of operation in Washington. Comparison cost is the estimated per-participant cost of confinement in a JRA facility for 16 weeks, the duration of the JOBTC residential phase.

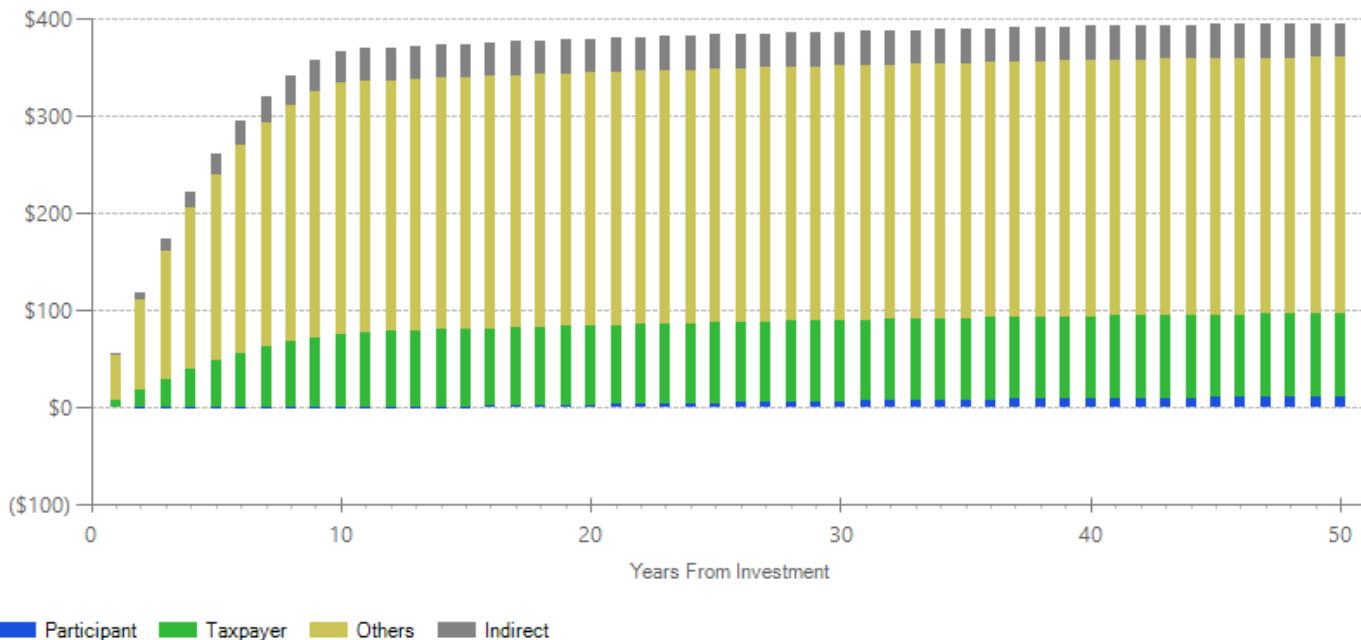
The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta-analysis. The cost range reported above reflects potential variation or uncertainty in the cost estimate; more detail can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Benefits Minus Costs Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)



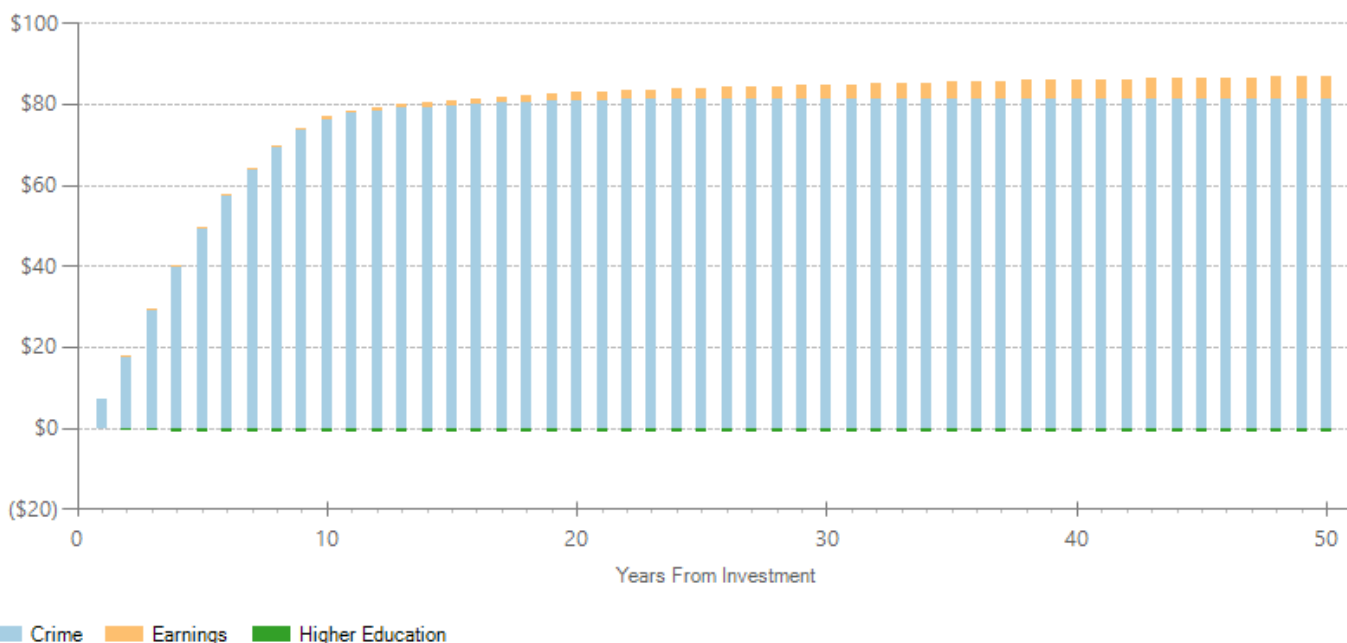
The graph above illustrates the estimated cumulative net benefits per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. We present these cash flows in discounted dollars. If the dollars are negative (bars below \$0 line), the cumulative benefits do not outweigh the cost of the program up to that point in time. The program breaks even when the dollars reach \$0. At this point, the total benefits to participants, taxpayers, and others, are equal to the cost of the program. If the dollars are above \$0, the benefits of the program exceed the initial investment.

Benefits by Perspective Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)



The graph above illustrates the breakdown of the estimated cumulative benefits (not including program costs) per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. These cash flows provide a breakdown of the classification of dollars over time into four perspectives: taxpayer, participant, others, and indirect. "Taxpayers" includes expected savings to government and expected increases in tax revenue. "Participants" includes expected increases in earnings and expenditures for items such as health care and college tuition. "Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance. "Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the changes in the value of a statistical life and changes in the deadweight costs of taxation. If a section of the bar is below the \$0 line, the program is creating a negative benefit, meaning a loss of value from that perspective.

Taxpayer Benefits by Source of Value Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)



The graph above focuses on the subset of estimated cumulative benefits that accrue to taxpayers. The cash flows are divided into the source of the value.

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

- Barnoski, R. (2004). *Washington's juvenile basic training camp: outcome evaluation*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Bottcher, J., & Ezell, M.E. (2005). Examining the effectiveness of boot camps: A randomized experiment with a long-term follow up. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 42(3), 309-332.
- Peters, M. (1996). *Evaluation of the impact of boot camps for juvenile offenders: Mobile interim report*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- T3 Associates Training and Consulting, & Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services. (2001). *Project Turnaround outcome evaluation: Final report*. Ottawa: T3 Associates Training and Consulting.
- Thomas, D., & Peters, M. (1996). *Evaluation of the impact of boot camps for juvenile offenders: Cleveland Interim Report*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

For further information, contact:
(360) 664-9800, institute@wsipp.wa.gov

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