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Abstract

Trends in Outcomes for Young People with Disabilities: Are We Making Progress?

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This paper uses the Current Population Survey (CPS) from 1981-2000 to compare long term trends in socio-economic outcomes for youth (aged 15-21) and young adults (aged 22-29) with work limitations to those for youth and young adults without work limitations. We focus on the years 1988 and 1999: years that roughly correspond to the peaks of successive business cycles. We find that prevalence of work limitations declined for males but increased for females, mostly accounted for by growth for African American females. Despite a substantial reduction in the educational attainment gap between young adults with and without disabilities, gaps in employment, earnings, dependency on public programs and poverty widened substantially. These trends could be due to factors that determine whether individuals report themselves to be work-limited, factors that affect individual outcomes regardless of self-reported work limitation status, or both sets of factors.

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