

# 1-page summary: Longitudinal analyses of educational outcomes

**Article Title** Okpych, N. J. & Courtney, M. E. (2019). Longitudinal analyses of educational outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in the U.S.: Trends and influential factors. *Oxford Review of Education*, 45(1), 461-480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2019.1592747>

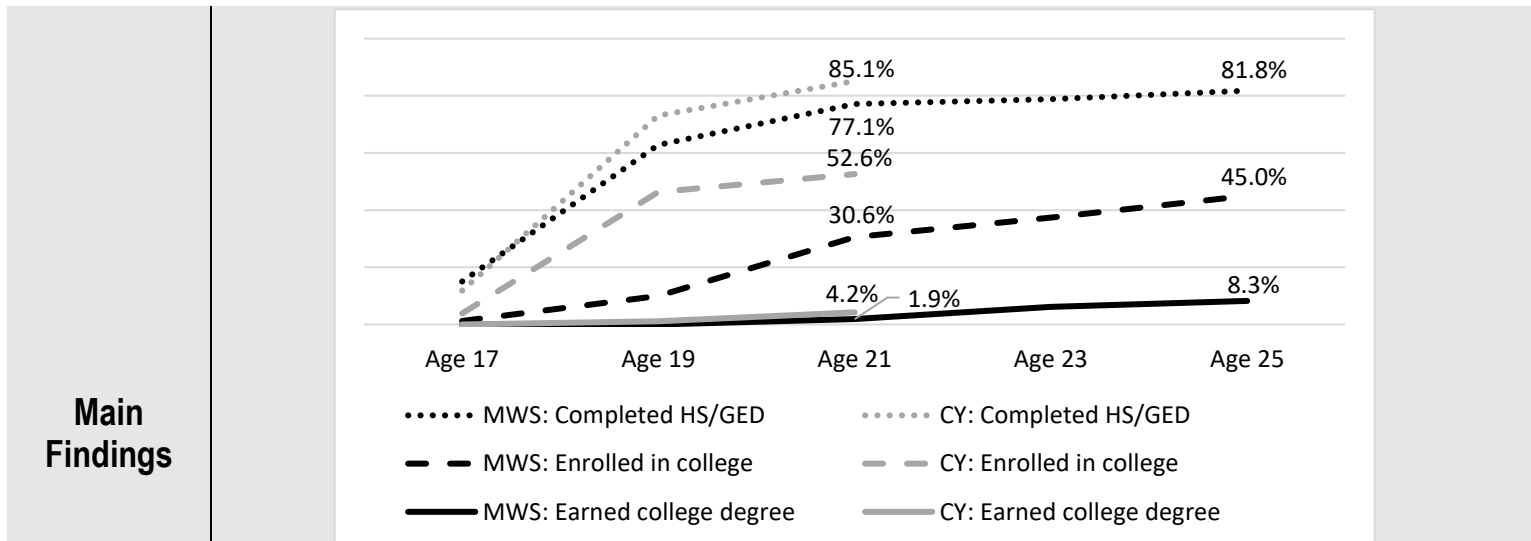
**Purpose** This paper draws on data collected from two of the most extensive longitudinal studies of care leavers in the US., the Midwest Study (2003-2011) and the CalYOUTH Study (2012- 2022). The paper has three aims:

1. Describe trends in secondary and postsecondary educational attainment at different ages
2. Summarize findings on predictors of educational attainment
3. Summarize findings on the impact of extended foster care (EFC) on educational attainment.

**Data & Methods**

**Sample:** The Midwest Study sample includes 732 young people who were in foster care in three Midwestern states between ages 17 and 17.5, and who had been in foster care for at least a year prior to age 17. The Midwest Study had five waves of surveys (up to age 25/26). The CalYOUTH Study sample includes 727 young people who were between the ages of 16.75 and 17.75 and were in California foster care for at least 6 months. At the time this article was written, CalYOUTH had conducted three waves of surveys (up to age 21).

**Analytic methods:** We first present trends in educational outcomes for care leavers across ages. Second, we summarize findings from previously published articles and reports from the Midwest Study and the CalYOUTH Study on predictors of educational outcomes, including the estimated impact of extended foster care (EFC, i.e., extending the foster care age limit beyond age 18).



- By age 21, over three-quarters of youth completed high school/GED and a third (Midwest) to a half (CalYOUTH) enrolled in college.
- Both studies found that spending more time in EFC increased youths' likelihood of finishing a high school credential and enrolling in college, but not persisting in college or completing a degree.
- Past educational achievements (e.g., higher reading proficiency, higher grades) and educational aspirations increased the likelihood of college enrollment while past educational difficulties (e.g., grade retention, placed in special education) decreased the probability of enrollment.
- Read about predictors of high school completion, college persistence/degree completion in the full article.

**Implications**

- Rates of educational attainment in these two studies are higher than what's been reported dated studies with dubious response rates that are commonly cited by scholars and advocates. **The Midwest Study and CalYOUTH Study likely provide more accurate estimates of educational outcomes** for youth with care histories, although they are not nationally representative.
- Understanding factors that stymie (e.g., past academic difficulties, young parents) and promote (e.g., certain types of social support, ETF) help to **inform intervention efforts and child welfare and education policy.**