

Do student outcomes vary by post-secondary pathways? Insights from a large administrative linkage

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Context

Existing research on the relationship between post-secondary pathways and student success in Ontario has relied on datasets which are subject to many limitations, ranging from sparse coverage of relevant controls to limited sample sizes across structurally small pathways (e.g., college-to-university). This research draws on a linkage between vast administrative files at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and various files within the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Linkage Platform (ELMLP) to overcome these limitations.

Key finding(s) from the research

This research finds that graduation rates vary considerably depending on the pathways that students travel through Ontario post-secondary education, and that these disparities persist even after controlling for differences among students across a wide range of characteristics – including academic performance at the high school level.

Population(s) studied: Students who started Grade 9 at TDSB between 2004-2006 and entered post-secondary education in Ontario in the Fall of 2009, 2010, or 2011.

Research dataset(s) used: Linkages between the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Linkage Platform (ELMLP), Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) files, T1 Family File (T1FF), Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) files, and administrative student records from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Policy implications for this research

For over a decade the Ontario provincial government has embraced transfer between post-secondary institutions as a policy strategy to support student success. This work produces evidence that transfer pathways potentially disadvantage the students traveling through them and, as such, raises questions about how this strategy can be fine-tuned. These findings support the notion that additional efforts are required to ensure that transfer aspiring students are supported throughout their journeys. This includes not only one-on-one transfer advising, but also timely access to information about course equivalencies and articulation agreements.

Policy area(s) this research can inform: Children and youth; Education, training and learning

Read the full article

Pizarro Milian, R., Reynolds, D., Jacob, N., Abdulkarim, F., Parekh, G., Brown, R., & Walters, D. (2024). Pathways to Success, or Unfulfilled Dreams? An Examination of Pathway-Based Disparities in Graduation Rates. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251231220869>