

**Neighborhood Effects on Barriers to Employment:
Results from a Randomized Housing Mobility Experiment in Baltimore**

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The Moving to Opportunity randomized housing voucher demonstration finds virtually no significant effects on employment or earnings of adults. Using qualitative data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 67 participants in Baltimore, we find that, although the voucher and control groups have similar rates of employment and earnings, a respondent's relationship to the labor market does differ by program group. Our analysis suggests that the voucher group did not experience employment or earnings gains in part because of human capital barriers that existed before moving to a low-poverty neighborhood. In addition, employed respondents in all groups were heavily concentrated in retail and health care jobs. To secure or maintain employment, they relied heavily on a particular job search strategy—informal referrals from similarly skilled and credentialed acquaintances who already held jobs in these sectors. Though experimentals were more likely to have neighbors who were employed, few of their neighbors held jobs in these sectors and could not provide such referrals. Thus controls had an easier time garnering such referrals. Additionally, the configuration of the metropolitan area's public transportation routes in relationship to the locations of hospitals, nursing homes, and malls posed additional transportation challenges to experimentals as they searched for employment—challenges controls were less likely to face.

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