Child care is a key support for Illinois’ workforce. 55% of those working in Illinois are parents. 40% of those parents have young children.

Access to child care is especially critical for Black mothers. 71% of Black mothers with young children are single parents, compared with 36% of Latina mothers and 20% of white mothers with young children.

Young parenthood boosts men’s labor force participation but depresses women’s labor force participation. 81% and 84% of childless Illinoisan women and men, respectively, participate in the labor force. Corresponding figures are 72% for mothers with young children and 98% for fathers with young children.

High child care costs challenge families with young children. (average cost) $8,800 per child per year = 12% of median household income. The child care industry is struggling. The child care workforce has decreased by 9% in Illinois since the start of the pandemic. 3,000 workers have left the industry.

NOTES: This fact sheet was prepared by Samantha Evans, Charles Gascon, Ana Kent and Ngân Trân of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Statistics are based on prime-age civilian adults ages 25-54. Young children are defined as ages 0-5. “Single” is defined as married with spouse absent, separated, divorced, widowed or never married/single. Average cost and child care workers are rounded to the nearest 100. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ definition of affordable child care is no more than 7% of household income. See Zeytoon Nejad Moosavian (2017) for the effect of parenthood on labor force participation.