

Secure Parental Employment

INDICATORS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH



As of 2013, more than one in four children (26 percent) did not have at least one resident parent employed full-time, year-round. Among children younger than six, three in ten (30 percent) were without secure parental employment and, of children in families headed by single mothers, more than half (58 percent).

Importance

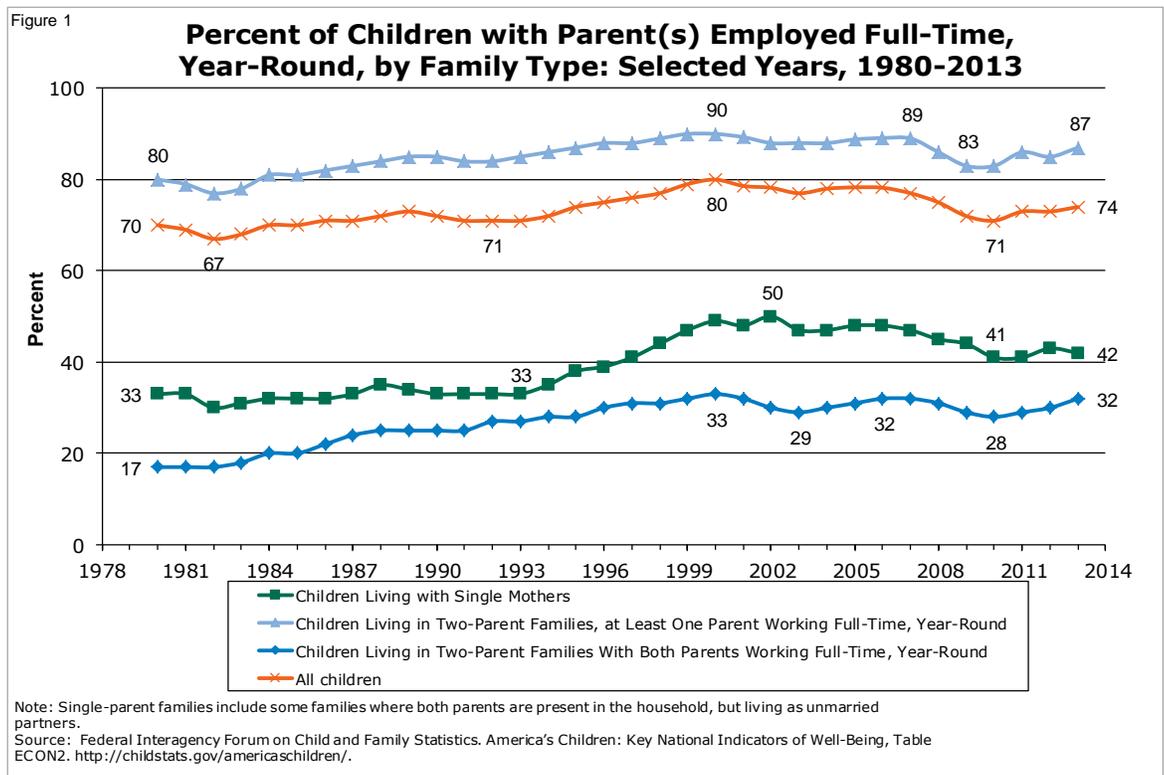
Secure attachment to the labor force, defined here as full-time, full-year employment, is a major contributor to financial stability and well-being for families. For low-income families, it is not a guarantee of escape from poverty,¹ but it is associated with higher family income and greater access to private health insurance. Higher income, in turn, is associated with many positive child outcomes including better health, behavior, academic achievement, and financial well-being as adults.^{2,3} In particular, deep, persistent, and early poverty are related to poorer child development.⁴ A study of low-income families found benefits to children's social-emotional skills when their mothers were employed early in the child's life, compared with similar children whose mothers who were not employed.⁵ However, in some cases, long hours of employment among mothers with very young children have been associated with modestly negative child outcomes.⁶

Studies have found drops in family income, as well as income fluctuation, to be associated with a greater risk of behavioral problems, and lower reading and mathematics achievement, compared with children in families who had not been poor.⁷ More recent research links parental (particularly fathers') permanent job loss to increased likelihood of parental divorce, family relocation, and children's repeating a grade; and to decreased earnings when children enter the labor force.^{8,9} Thus, the "scarring" effects of parental unemployment may be multigenerational.¹⁰



Trends

The proportion of children with at least one resident parent employed full-time, year-round rose from a low of 67 percent in 1982, to 72 percent in 1990, and 80 percent in 2000, but declined between 2000 and 2010, to 71 percent. By 2013, the proportion had increased to 74 percent of all children. Gains in secure parental employment during the 1990-to-2000 period were particularly large for children in families headed by single parents, for non-Hispanic black children, and for children in poor families. In contrast, between 2006 and 2010, change in this indicator was negative for all groups. Positive gains since then have been mainly among children living with two parents. (Figure 1 and Appendix 1)

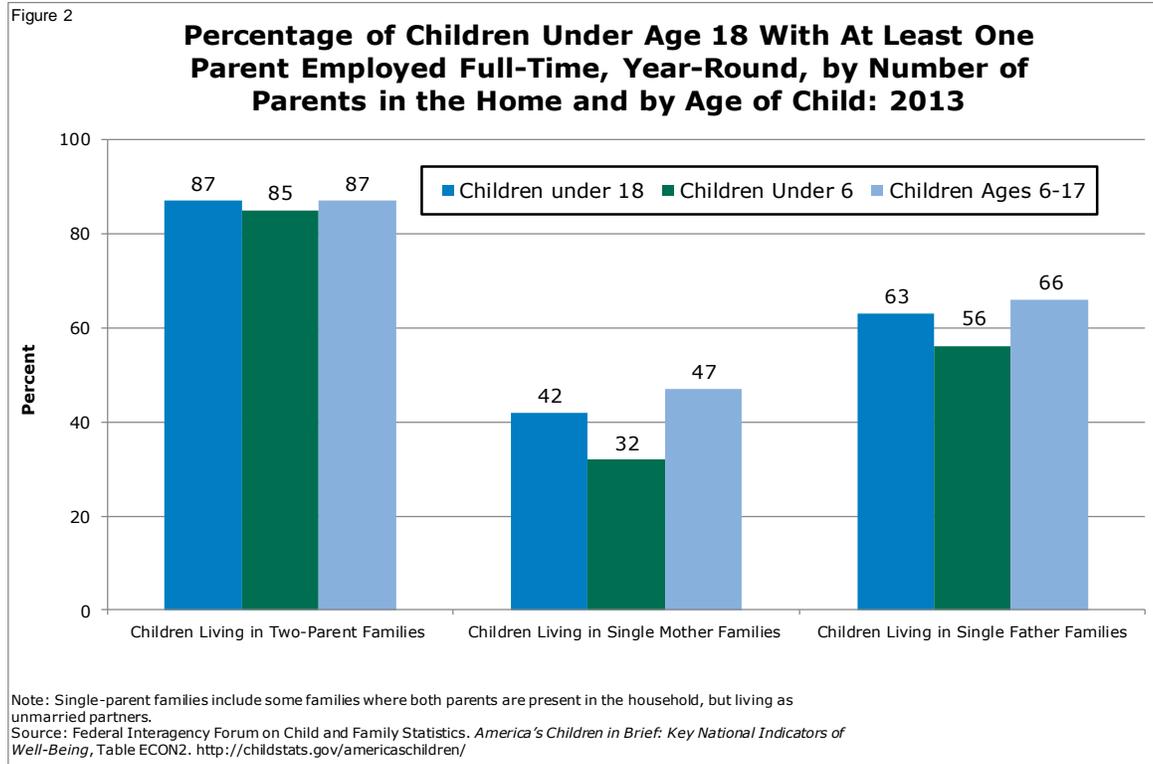


Differences by Family Structure

Children who live in single-parent families are more vulnerable to a parent's loss of employment than are children living with two married parents. Among children who lived with two married parents in 2013, 87 percent had at least one parent employed full-time, year-round, compared with 42 percent of children living with single mothers, and 63 percent of children living with single fathers. (Figure 2)

Among children living with single mothers, the proportion whose mother was employed full-time declined steadily, from 48 percent in 2006 to 41 percent in 2010, with few gains since. This decline followed a period, coincident with welfare reform, when the rate increased from 33 percent (in 1993) to 50 percent (in 2002).

Among children in families with two parents, secure employment for parents also increased between 1985 and 2000, from 81 to 90 percent. After remaining steady through 2007, the proportion of children in this group who had at least one parent securely employed fell to 83 percent in 2009, recovering to 87 percent by 2013. The proportion of children whose parents both had secure employment, reached a high of 33 percent in 2000, which has not been regained since. The proportion was 32 percent in 2013. (Figure 1)

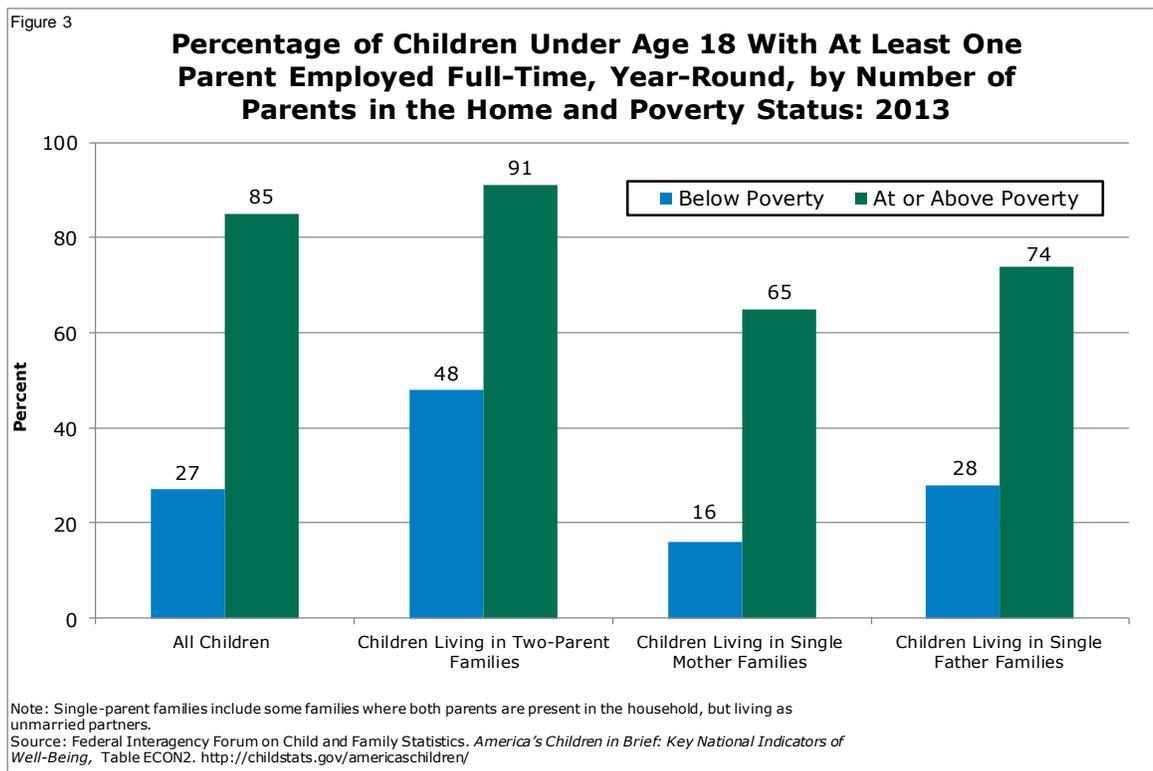


Differences by Age

Older children are more likely than younger children to have at least one parent employed full-time, year-round. Among children living in single-mother families in 2013, 32 percent of children under age six had mothers employed full-time, year-round, compared with 47 percent of children ages 6 to 17. Among children living in two-parent households, the share of children living with at least one parent employed full-time, year-round also varies by age-group, although the disparity is much smaller (85 and 87 percent, respectively, for children five and younger, and six and older). (Figure 2)

Differences by Poverty Status

In 2013, among children living below the poverty line, slightly more than one in four had at least one parent in the household employed full-time, year-round, compared with more than eight out of ten children at or above the poverty line (27 and 85 percent, respectively). Within each household type (dual-parent, single-mother, single-father), children in poverty were much less likely than non-poor children to have a securely employed parent. (Figure 3)



Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin¹¹

In 2013, white children were more likely than Hispanic children to have at least one parent employed full-time, year-round (81 and 66 percent, respectively). At 57 percent, black children were less likely than either white or Hispanic children to have at least one parent with secure employment. However, black children in two-parent families were similar to their Hispanic peers in their likelihood of having at least one parent employed (81 and 80 percent, respectively). Black children living with single mothers were also as likely as their Hispanic peers to have a securely employed parent (41 and 40 percent, respectively). White children in all family types were more likely than their non-white peers to have a securely employed parent. (Appendix 1)

State and Local Estimates

State-level estimates for the following indicators are available from the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#):

- the percentage of children living in families where no parent has full-time, full-year employment
- the percentage of children under age six with all available parents in the labor force
- the percentage of children under age six, and children ages 6-12, with no parent in the labor force
- the percentage of children in immigrant families without secure parental employment
- the percentage of children in immigrant families with all available parents in the labor force
- the percentage of children in immigrant families with no parent in the labor force

International Estimates

None available.

National Goals

None.

What Works to Make Progress on This Indicator

See Hashim, K. and Moore, K. A. (2007). What works for increasing family income and parental employment: Lessons from experimental evaluations of programs and interventions. Child Trends Fact



Sheet. Retrieved from www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Child_Trends-2008_05_01_FS_WWFamilyIncome.pdf.

Also, see the Self Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse from the Department of Health and Human Services at www.opressrc.org

Related Indicators

- Children in Working Poor Families: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=children-in-working-poor-families
- Youth Neither Enrolled in School nor Working: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=youth-neither-enrolled-in-school-nor-working
- Children in Poverty: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=children-in-poverty
- Child Recipients of Welfare: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=child-recipients-of-welfareafdctanf
- Long-term Welfare Dependence: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=long-term-welfare-dependence

Definition

A parent is defined as securely employed if he or she was usually working full-time (at least 35 hours per week) for 50 or more weeks in the most recent calendar year.

Data Source

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, Table ECON2. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>.

Raw Data Source

Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement
(formerly known as the March Supplement)

www.census.gov/cps/



Appendix 1 - Secure Parental Employment: Percentage of Children Under Age 18 Living With at Least One Parent Employed Full-Time, All Year: ¹ Selected Years, 1980-2013

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
All Children Living with Parent(s)	70	70	72	74	80	79	78	77	78	78	78	77	75	72	71	73	73	74
Race/Hispanic origin²																		
White, non-Hispanic	75	77	79	81	85	84	83	82	82	84	83	82	81	79	79	79	80	81
Black, non-Hispanic	50	48	50	54	66	65	64	61	62	62	64	64	61	58	53	56	57	57
Hispanic	59	55	60	61	72	73	73	71	73	74	74	72	68	62	61	65	65	66
Poverty Status																		
Below Poverty	21	20	22	25	34	32	33	30	33	32	33	32	30	26	24	27	27	27
At or Above Poverty	81	82	85	86	88	87	87	86	87	88	88	87	85	83	83	85	85	85
Age																		
Children Under 6	67	67	68	69	76	76	75	73	74	75	75	73	71	67	66	69	69	70
Children Ages 6-17	72	72	74	76	81	80	79	79	79	80	80	79	77	74	73	74	75	76



	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Children Living in Families Maintained by Two Parents	80	81	85	87	90	89	88	88	88	89	89	89	86	83	83	86	85	87
With Both Parents Working Full-Time, All-Year	17	20	25	28	33	32	30	29	30	31	32	32	31	29	28	29	30	32
Race/Hispanic origin²																		
White, non-Hispanic	81	83	86	89	92	91	90	90	90	91	91	90	89	87	87	88	89	90
Black, non-Hispanic	73	76	84	85	90	89	84	85	86	85	86	87	84	82	76	82	81	81
Hispanic	71	70	74	77	85	84	82	82	84	85	85	84	80	74	73	79	78	80
Poverty Status																		
Below Poverty	38	37	44	46	58	54	54	52	55	57	58	54	51	44	40	48	46	48
At or Above Poverty	84	87	89	91	93	92	91	91	92	92	92	92	90	88	89	90	90	91
Age																		
Children Under 6	76	79	83	86	89	88	85	86	86	87	87	87	84	80	80	83	84	85
Children Ages 6-17	81	82	85	87	91	90	89	88	89	90	90	90	88	85	84	87	86	87
Children Living in Families Maintained by Single Mothers³	33	32	33	38	49	48	50	47	47	48	48	47	45	44	41	41	43	42
Race/Ethnicity																		
White, non-Hispanic	39	39	40	46	53	52	52	52	49	52	51	49	48	47	46	45	46	45
Black, non-Hispanic	28	25	27	33	49	48	49	44	45	45	46	48	45	42	40	39	41	41
Hispanic	22	22	24	27	38	42	45	43	45	45	46	44	40	40	36	38	40	40
Poverty Status																		
Below Poverty	7	7	9	14	20	19	19	17	19	17	19	20	16	16	15	16	17	16
At or Above Poverty	59	59	60	61	67	67	69	69	67	70	70	68	67	66	65	65	66	65
Age																		
Children Under 6	20	20	21	24	36	38	40	34	34	37	37	36	33	34	31	32	32	32
Children Ages 6-17	38	37	40	45	55	53	54	53	52	53	54	53	51	48	47	46	47	47



	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Children Living in Families Maintained by Single Fathers³	57	60	64	67	69	69	68	63	68	71	67	66	61	54	55	62	61	63
Race/Hispanic origin²																		
White, non-Hispanic	61	62	68	72	74	71	70	66	70	74	70	68	64	59	62	66	65	68
Black, non-Hispanic	41	59	53	64	52	58	64	54	61	65	64	62	56	48	41	58	51	50
Hispanic	53	53	59	58	68	72	70	63	69	67	64	61	56	47	52	60	61	62
Poverty Status																		
Below Poverty	15	23	21	24	21	29	34	27	26	32	26	28	22	17	18	24	25	28
At or Above Poverty	68	69	74	79	79	78	77	73	78	80	78	76	71	67	69	74	74	74
Age																		
Children Under 6	48	57	58	54	65	67	65	56	62	66	61	61	56	46	50	60	56	56
Children Ages 6-17	59	62	67	74	70	70	70	65	71	73	70	69	63	58	58	63	64	66

¹Full-time, all-year employment is defined as usually working full time (35 hours or more per week) for 50-52 weeks.

²Data for estimates before 1980 are based on the race/ethnicity of the child, from 1980 on estimates are based on the race/ethnicity of the mother. Before 1980 data for the mother's marital status was estimated for the United States from data for registration areas in which marital status of mother was reported. For 1980 on, data for States in which the mother's marital status was not reported were inferred from other items on the birth certificate and included with data from the reporting States. Estimates reflect the new OMB race definitions, and include only those who are identified with a single race. Hispanics may be of any race.

³Includes some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available at: <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables>.



Endnotes

¹ Cauthen, N. (2002). *Policies that improve family income matter to children*. National Center for Children in Poverty. <http://www.nccp.org/media/iec02a-text.pdf>

² Brooks-Gunn, J., and Duncan, G. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *The Future of Children*, 7(2), 55-71. http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=72165

³ Dahl, G., and Lochner, L. (2008). The impact of family income on child achievement: Evidence from the Earned Income Tax Credit. *NBER Working Paper No. 14599*. Washington, DC: National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁴ Moore, K. A., Redd, Z., Burkhauser, M., Mbwana, K., & Collins, A. (2009). *Children in poverty: Trends, consequences, and policy options*. Child Trends Research Brief. www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/PovertyRB.pdf.

⁵ Coley, R. L. & Lombardi, C. M. (2013). Does maternal employment following childbirth support or inhibit low-income children's long-term development? *Child Development*, 84(1), 178–197.

⁶ Lucas-Thompson, R. G., Goldberg, W. A., & Prause, J. (2012). Maternal work early in the lives of children and its distal association with achievement and behavior problems: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(6), 915-942.

⁷ Moore, K, Gleib, D., Driscoll, A, Zaslowsky, M., and Redd, Z. (2002). Poverty and welfare patterns: Implications for children. *Journal of Social Policy*, 31(2), 207-227.

⁸ Stevens, A. H., and Schaller, J. (2011). Short-run effects of parental job loss on children's academic achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 30(2), 289-299.

⁹ Oreopoulos, P., Page, M., and Stevens, A. H. (2008). The intergenerational effects of worker displacement. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 26(3), 455-483.

¹⁰ Irons, J. (2009). *Economic scarring: The long-term impacts of the recession*. EPI Briefing Paper # 243. Economic Policy Institute. www.epi.org

¹¹ Hispanics may be any race. Estimates for whites and blacks in this report do not include Hispanics.