

ILLINOIS KIDS COUNT 2015



## Confronting Poverty, Creating Opportunity

**VOICES**  
for Illinois Children

## Voices for Illinois Children

Voices for Illinois Children works as a catalyst for change to improve the lives of children of all ages throughout our state.

We are committed to the well-being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. We believe children do well when they grow up in strong, supportive families, and that families do well in supportive communities. We believe in focusing on preventing problems by employing comprehensive, well-researched strategies to improve children's education and health care and to strengthen their families' economic security and the social services on which they depend.

For over 25 years, we have helped parents, community leaders, and policymakers understand and respond to the issues facing children and families. Together, we have affected the well-being of an entire generation of Illinois children through achievements in early childhood education and care, K–12 education, health care, children's mental health, child welfare, family economic security, and afterschool and youth development.

Voices raises awareness of the needs facing children and families, builds strong partnerships focused on solutions, convenes stakeholders to explore data, generates public support and political will for needed improvements, and works to ensure implementation of strong policies and programs.

**OUR MISSION** Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois to assure the future well-being of everyone in the state. We work with families, communities, and policymakers to help children grow up healthy, nurtured, safe, and well-educated.

## Illinois Kids Count

Illinois Kids Count is a project of Voices for Illinois Children and is part of the KIDS COUNT® network of projects supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the status of America's children on a state-by-state basis. Through Illinois Kids Count reports, media events, statewide and local symposia, legislator forums, and other activities, Voices for Illinois Children assesses the challenges facing children and families and seeks to guide policy trends and goals on behalf of children.

The *Illinois Kids Count* report uses the best available data to measure the educational, social and emotional, economic, and physical well-being of children. By providing policymakers and the broader public with benchmarks of child well-being, *Illinois Kids Count* enriches local and state discussions of ways to build and secure better futures for all children. *Illinois Kids Count* monitors child outcomes and contributes to public accountability for those outcomes, resulting in a model for data-driven advocacy for children, their families, and their communities.

*Illinois Kids Count 2015* can be viewed, downloaded, or ordered online at [www.voices4kids.org](http://www.voices4kids.org).

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## KIDS COUNT DATA CENTER

# Foreword





# CONFRONTING CHILD POVERTY IN ILLINOIS

All children are born both powerful and powerless. Their power lies in their potential to live healthy, happy, productive, and full lives. Their powerlessness lies in the fact that their ability to achieve this potential is in many ways completely dependent on the circumstances of their caregivers and the environments in which they develop.

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**GAYLORD GIESEKE**  
President, Voices  
for Illinois Children

While individual children and the circumstances of their births vary, the core set of needs children have in order to achieve their full potential does not. All children need nurturing relationships, nutritious foods, adequate clothing, sleep, exercise, access to health care, a healthy living environment, safe communities, adult guidance, and access to a quality education.

Most children in Illinois live in economic situations that are sufficient to meet these core needs and set the foundation for future success. But too many do not. About one in five children in our state—more than 600,000—live in poverty. These children face obstacles that adversely affect their future opportunities. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to have physical health problems, delayed social-emotional development, and lower academic achievement. While each of these challenges is burdensome on its own, each also can translate into diminished economic opportunities and outcomes in adulthood.

In a country and time where the stories we tell about ourselves rely so strongly on themes of opportunity and success based on hard work and individual choice, it can be beyond shocking to confront the realities of poverty and face the difficult counter-narratives it tells. Our opportunities for success in life are profoundly shaped during childhood by factors that are outside our individual control; the economic security of all

families matters if we are serious about equality of opportunity; and the failure to act is costly both economically and morally. These are hard truths. Child poverty is a complex problem that presents very tough challenges. It's not surprising that we often try to absolve ourselves individually and collectively from responsibility for not confronting those challenges.

For some of us, it may seem appropriate to deny responsibility for addressing child poverty because it is framed as the product of individual choices for which said individuals (“them”) alone are accountable, but this is incomplete and inaccurate. While individual choices are involved, so are centuries of public choices in the form of laws, policies, institutions, and programs that preserved and granted economic and political opportunities to some, while systematically and repeatedly denying them to others. Likewise, such a view turns a blind eye to the effects of economic forces beyond any individual's control—forces like eroding wages, unstable employment, and effects of the Great Recession. Economic forces and public policies have played a role in creating and perpetuating poverty, and public policies can play a role in alleviating and reducing it. To be clear—doing “nothing” in our current social and economic context is not a neutral policy choice, but rather one that exacerbates poverty.

For some of us, it's possible to ignore child poverty based on the belief that it doesn't affect us, but this is shortsighted and inaccurate. While children and families living in poverty and communities with high concentrations of poverty bear the most immediate and tangible costs, child poverty is also costly for the state and society as a whole. Child poverty increases the need for costly interventions throughout later life stages. Children whose economic opportunities are limited due to the adverse effects of growing up in poverty are

to address it, but this is fatalistic and inaccurate. While child poverty is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that eludes a "silver bullet" solution, there are many effective public policies at the federal, state, and local levels that we know make a difference. And there are many other promising strategies that could bolster all children's opportunities for success.

Confronting child poverty requires a comprehensive set of policy strategies that focus on both children and their parents. Our efforts must address economic hardship and its impact on child development, especially for families with very young children. And we must expand opportunities for children and families to maximize their capacities and improve their lives.

As a state, we have made many policy decisions over the years that have helped struggling families meet the basic needs of their children, improve their future opportunities, and help them realize healthier, more productive, and more fulfilling lives. However, after a long period of steady progress in expanding state investments in children and families, our investments in the most vulnerable Illinoisans have been cut and are now in grave danger.

Illinois is at a crossroads. What kind of state will we be? Which children will our social and economic policies help succeed? Which children will we fail through our own inaction? For Voices for Illinois Children, it's economically and morally imperative to provide all children—no matter the circumstances of their birth—with opportunities to realize their true potential and to take full part in our communities, economy, and shared prosperity. We hope you will join us in this response to child poverty and take part in the focused and sustained efforts necessary to muster the public and political will to make collective choices that will truly afford greater opportunities for all.

**Children whose opportunities have been limited by poverty deprive society of the value of their potential productivity. The future prosperity of our state depends on our ability to expand opportunities for all children and families across Illinois.**

more likely to need to rely on social safety net programs as adults. Children whose opportunities have been limited by poverty deprive society of the value of their potential productivity, as well as the accompanying tax revenues such productivity would have generated. The children of today, including those in poverty, are the workforce, parents, and taxpayers of tomorrow. The future prosperity of our state depends on our ability to expand opportunities for all children and families across Illinois.

For some of us, it's tempting to view child poverty as a distressing but intractable problem and to give up on the daunting work necessary



# Introduction



# TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND POLICY STRATEGIES

**The extent and persistence of child poverty run counter to the widely held American value of equal opportunity. Child poverty also generates short-term and long-term economic costs for society as a whole.<sup>1</sup>**

In 2013, more than 600,000 Illinois children—about one in five—lived in households with incomes below poverty level (about \$18,750 for a family of three). Another 600,000 were above poverty level but were still in low-income households (defined as below 200 percent of poverty level). The state's child poverty rate (percentage of children in poverty) was only slightly lower than its peak in 2011. Child poverty rates in both Illinois and the U.S. as a whole are higher than pre-recession levels and much higher than in the late 1990s.

These disturbing trends partly reflect the lingering effects of the Great Recession. Workers with lower levels of education and less job experience, including young parents, are very vulnerable during a severe and prolonged economic downturn. Child poverty is thus likely to remain high even as the economy recovers. In addition, large-scale economic crises can have long-term “scarring” effects for individuals and families. Recession-induced poverty can lead to diminished opportunities and worse economic outcomes for children.<sup>2</sup>

The Great Recession is only part of the story, however. The nation's economy was experiencing slow growth well before the financial collapse of 2008. Since 1999, median earnings for full-time, year-round workers, as well as median family income, have failed to keep pace with inflation. Over a longer period of time, employment opportunities have steadily diminished for those without college degrees. For example, between 1990 and 2013, employment in the manufacturing sector declined by 32 percent nationwide and by 37 percent in Illinois.<sup>3</sup>

### The Effects of Poverty on Children and Families

Poverty rates for children are highest among those under age 6, and early childhood poverty can be harmful for cognitive, social-emotional, and health outcomes later in life. The effects of family income on child well-being can be understood in several different ways. More affluent families can invest more resources in their children's development. Such investments include health care, adequate nutrition, early learning opportunities, home computers, and safe and supportive neighborhoods. Beyond the issue of "what money can buy," the stress arising from unstable employment and financial uncertainty can adversely affect parenting and the quality of family relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Children in poverty are less ready for school at age 5, less likely to perform well in elementary school, and more likely to drop out of high school. Nationwide data over the past three decades show a growing gap in academic achievement between the poorest and most affluent children. The achievement gap based on family income has actually become larger than the Black-White achievement gap, which narrowed between 1970 and 1990 but remains substantial.

In regard to post-secondary education, there have been widening gaps over time between income groups in both college attendance and college graduation.<sup>5</sup>

On a wide range of health indicators, children and parents in poverty fare less well than those at higher income levels. For example, poor children are more likely to have chronic or acute health conditions, and they miss more days of school due to illness or injury. Families that are struggling to make ends meet are more likely to experience severe stress that can lead to depression and anxiety, as well as greater risk of substance abuse and domestic violence. Young children and their parents are especially vulnerable to the effects of chronic stress.<sup>6</sup>





The relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect is complex. Most poor families do not become involved with the child welfare system, but poverty is clearly a risk factor, especially for cases of neglect. Moreover, child abuse and neglect can have harmful long-term consequences. For example, adults who have experienced abuse and/or neglect in childhood are likely to have lower levels of education, employment, and earnings.<sup>7</sup>



### Group Disparities

The effects of the recession and longer-term economic trends have been most damaging for the most disadvantaged demographic groups. High poverty rates among Black and Latino families reflect cumulative disadvantages across multiple domains—education, health, housing,

employment, and others. Systemic barriers to opportunity include residential segregation, historical and ongoing discrimination, and lack of access to high-quality schools, as well as language barriers, cultural barriers, and immigration status.<sup>8</sup>

Racial-ethnic disparities in economic hardship have persisted over time, although the magnitude of these disparities has fluctuated. Disparities in child poverty increased during the 1980s, substantially narrowed in the latter part of the 1990s (due largely to strong economic growth), and then widened again during the Great Recession. Between 1992 and 2000, the nationwide poverty rate dropped from 47 percent to 31 percent for Black children and from 40 percent to 28 percent for Latino children. By 2012, poverty rates were substantially higher—39 percent for Black children and 34 percent for Latino children—although still lower than in 1992. Among White children, by contrast, both the decline in poverty in the 1990s and the increase in the 2000s were much smaller.<sup>9</sup>

### Family Structure

Over several decades, there has been a nationwide trend—among all major racial-ethnic groups—of more children living in single-parent families, primarily single-mother families. Single mothers are often equated with never-married women, but about half of all women who are raising children alone are divorced, separated, or widowed. Changes in family structure were a major factor in the growth in child poverty between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s, but economic changes have been the dominant force since then.<sup>10</sup>

Single-mother households typically face multiple difficulties, including time pressures, child care arrangements, and financial strain.



Median earnings for women remain substantially lower than those for men. Poverty rates for single-mother families declined substantially in the 1990s but rose sharply during the Great Recession, exceeding 40 percent nationwide in 2012.

### **The Geography of Child Poverty**

Child poverty is increasingly a challenge in many different parts of the state. The child poverty rate in the city of Chicago remains substantially higher than the statewide average, but the city's share of the child poverty population has sharply declined. In 1999, Chicago accounted for almost half of the child poverty population in Illinois; the city's share is now only about one-third.

By contrast, growing numbers of poor children are in the suburbs of metropolitan Chicago. In 2012, one-third of the state's child poverty population lived in suburban Cook County and the five collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will), up from about one-fifth in 1999. This trend toward the suburbanization of poverty can be found in many other metropolitan areas across the nation.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the largest increases in child poverty in Illinois have been in economically distressed areas outside metropolitan Chicago. Such areas include Winnebago and Stephenson counties in northern Illinois, Macon and Vermilion counties in the central part of the state, and Marion County in the south. These counties have also experienced steep declines in employment since 2000.

### **Effective Policy Strategies**

Child poverty is a complex problem that must be addressed with a comprehensive set of policy strategies. There are no "silver bullets." Some observers maintain that government efforts to combat poverty

have failed, but a growing body of research identifies many policies and programs that are or can be effective in alleviating and reducing poverty and in expanding opportunities for children.

**Children in poverty are less ready for school at age 5, less likely to perform well in elementary school, and more likely to drop out of high school. Nationwide data over the past three decades show a growing gap in academic achievement between the poorest and most affluent children.**

### **Strengthening Income and Work Supports**

During the Great Recession, the most effective programs for families with children were the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Both EITC and SNAP benefits were increased in 2009 under federal recovery legislation. The enhanced EITC provisions have been extended through 2017, but SNAP benefits were rolled back in 2013.

The EITC enables low-income working families to keep more of their wages. The benefit structure encourages and rewards work, and the credit is largest for families close to poverty level. (For a family with two children, the maximum credit is about \$5,400). Families receiving the EITC are also typically eligible for the federal Child Tax Credit, which is worth up to \$1,000 per child. The U.S. Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure shows that the EITC and Child Tax Credit together moved nearly 5 million children above poverty level in 2011.

Moreover, research has found that the EITC has positive long-term effects for children, including better health outcomes and improved reading and math achievement.<sup>12</sup>

Illinois has a state version of the EITC, currently valued at 10 percent of the federal EITC. Among the more than two dozen states with EITCs, only six have smaller credits. If Illinois increased its state EITC to 20 percent, the credit would be a more effective tool for strengthening family economic security. Illinois could also make important strides by adopting a state version of the Child Tax Credit.

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SNAP (formerly the Food Stamp program) moved more than 2 million children out of poverty in 2011. Since the poorest households receive the largest monthly benefits, SNAP also moves large numbers of children out of deep poverty (below 50 percent of the federal poverty level or about \$9,400 for a family of three). Access to food assistance in early childhood is associated with better health and economic outcomes in adulthood.<sup>13</sup>

Affordable child care is particularly important for low-income working families. Parents receiving child care assistance are more likely to have

stable employment.<sup>14</sup> The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, which is funded by both federal and state resources, enables parents to keep their jobs and provides access to high-quality settings that contribute to children's cognitive and social-emotional development, as well as their physical health. Participating families are required to make co-payments on a sliding scale based on household income.

### **Expanding Educational Opportunities**

Extensive evidence demonstrates the importance of investing in early childhood education. High-quality preschool programs can produce significant gains in school readiness and academic success, as well as improved economic outcomes in adulthood. Children from low-income families experience the most significant cognitive and social-emotional gains from participation in high-quality preschool.<sup>15</sup> In Illinois, the Early Childhood Block Grant provides funding for preschool programs at the local level, as well as developmental services for infants and toddlers. In FY 2014, state-funded preschool programs served about 75,000 3- and 4-year-olds, primarily children from low-income households, English language learners, and other at-risk children.

Two-generation policies and programs seek to address the needs of low-income families by creating opportunities for both children and their parents.<sup>16</sup> One promising approach combines early childhood education with education or job training for adults. An example is the Evanston Two-Generation Education Initiative, a pilot program launched last year through a partnership of Northwestern University, the Evanston Community Foundation, and the Aspen Institute.

The benefits of early childhood education must be sustained by later investments. Expanding educational opportunities requires improving the quality of teaching and classroom experiences in

public schools serving children from low-income families. There are effective strategies that can enhance academic outcomes for low-income students, but meaningful educational improvements cannot be achieved without significant amounts of resources that are used wisely. School funding alone does not determine educational quality, but Illinois is among the states with the largest funding disparities between high-poverty and low-poverty school districts.<sup>17</sup>

High-quality afterschool programs can improve outcomes for disadvantaged youth. In particular, programs that follow evidence-based practices to promote social and emotional development are associated with improvements in self-perception, social behavior, and academic achievement. There is also evidence that well-designed community-based mentoring programs can have significant effects on academic outcomes for disadvantaged youth.<sup>18</sup>

One cost-effective approach to address the wide gap in educational attainment is through financial assistance programs that enable low-income students to attend and complete college. Studies of various state-administered programs suggest that investments in college aid can yield a return of more than four times the costs in the form of higher lifetime earnings of participants.<sup>19</sup> In Illinois, the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP) is an important source of financial assistance for low-income college students, but funding has lagged behind the rising costs of higher education.

### Promoting Healthy Families

The single largest program that addresses the needs of children in poverty is Medicaid. Over the past several decades, the expansion of health care coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) has greatly reduced the number of uninsured children,

improved access to health care, and enhanced financial security for families. Expanding health coverage for low-income children has had large positive effects on high school graduation, college attendance, and college completion, as well as earnings in adulthood.<sup>20</sup>



Parental health can affect child well-being in various ways, and health insurance coverage for parents is beneficial for the entire family, especially low-income families. In 2010, the nationwide uninsured rate was 18 percent for parents, compared with 8 percent for children. A key reason for this gap is that for children, the erosion of employment-based coverage has been largely offset by increased enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP.<sup>21</sup> In Illinois, the income eligibility limit for medical assistance is



currently 318 percent of poverty level for children but only 138 percent of poverty level for parents. For low-income parents who are not eligible for Medicaid, coverage through the new health insurance marketplace, established under the Affordable Care Act, is essential.

Home visiting programs offer a broad range of intensive services and supports for at-risk families with young children or those expecting children. Home visiting can contribute to improved maternal and child health, enhanced social-emotional development, and future academic success.<sup>22</sup> Illinois has been using federal funds through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program to expand and strengthen evidence-based initiatives in targeted communities across the state.

Strategies for alleviating and reducing poverty should address the mental health needs of children and their families. Over the past 10 years, Illinois

has taken steps toward building a comprehensive, coordinated system of mental health services for children. The state has made efforts to reach more children at younger ages and earlier stages of need, reduce fragmentation of services, and enhance interagency collaboration. Illinois has also been promoting early detection and treatment of maternal depression. However, progress in mental health has been stalled by funding cuts and by the severe shortage of community-based services. There is still much work to be done, including expanding the array of services available under Medicaid and increasing capacity for prevention and treatment of childhood trauma.

### Challenges Ahead

The prolonged state fiscal crisis has seriously impeded existing efforts to alleviate child poverty. The failure of the General Assembly to maintain income tax revenue before the end of 2014 has made a very difficult situation much worse. The projected revenue shortfall for FY 2016 is over \$5 billion, which would require massive budget cuts. Here are some examples of the impact of cuts to programs serving low-income children over the past six years. Without additional revenue, these programs could be hit by additional cuts of 25 percent or more.

- Child care services were underfunded by about \$300 million in the FY 2015 state budget. This huge gap will result in the loss of services for tens of thousands of children and/or the resumption of long delays in payments to child care providers. In previous years, the income eligibility ceiling for child care assistance was lowered, and family co-payments were increased substantially. Recent federal legislation seeks to strengthen stability in child care by requiring continuous 12-month eligibility for assistance. But implementing continuous eligibility will be a major challenge for Illinois.



■ State funding for preschool programs has been reduced by 25 percent since FY 2009. The number of children served in FY 2014 was 25,000 lower than five years earlier. In December 2014, Illinois was awarded \$80 million over four years through the federal Preschool Development Grants competition. This new funding is designed to increase access to preschool for four-year-old children in low-income families, but it is contingent on the state increasing its own investments.

■ Teen REACH, which provides grants for afterschool programs in 57 targeted communities in Illinois, has been hit by repeated budget cuts. The number of at-risk youth participating in Teen REACH has declined by 50 percent since FY 2007.

■ Annual funding for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission has been cut by more than \$40 million since FY 2009. The maximum MAP grant covered average tuition and fees at state universities in FY 2002 but only 35 percent of those costs in FY 2014.

At the federal level, many policies and programs that benefit low-income children will increasingly be under siege. It is imperative that Congress maintain and strengthen investments in Medicaid, SNAP, child care, early childhood education, and other areas. Federal funding for CHIP and home visiting must be reauthorized in 2015.

Given the evidence on early childhood development and the effects of poverty on young children, policymakers should consider focusing income and work supports accordingly. Programs such as EITC and SNAP, as well as child care assistance, could be made even more effective by increasing benefits for families with young children.<sup>23</sup>

The policy strategies discussed here are not meant to be exhaustive. Policies for improving family economic security should also address issues

affecting the low-wage workforce, which is disproportionately female. Raising the minimum wage would be especially important for single-mother families. Beyond that, low-wage jobs rarely provide sick pay or family leave, and volatile work schedules make child care arrangements more difficult. Finally, the single most effective way of reducing poverty rates in the short term would be federal economic policies that produce full employment.<sup>24</sup>

**Given the effects of poverty on early childhood development, policymakers should consider focusing income and work supports accordingly. Programs such as EITC and SNAP could be made even more effective by increasing benefits for families with young children.**

## Organization of the Report

The indicators in the *Illinois Kids Count 2015* report are organized into five main sections: children, families, and poverty; child poverty in metropolitan Chicago; employment and family income; the effects of child poverty; and policies and programs for low-income families. Unless otherwise noted, all data are Illinois-specific.

An additional section contains detailed county-level data (as well as data for the city of Chicago) on child demographics, poverty, family income, employment, and participation in selected programs. These exhibits cover the 40 largest counties, which represent more than 90 percent of all children in Illinois. The report concludes with a set of guest essays that provide broader perspectives on strategies for confronting poverty and creating opportunity.

# MEASURING POVERTY

Most of the poverty data in this report come from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which uses the **official federal poverty measure**. The federal poverty level is a set of income thresholds for households of different types and sizes. A household is considered poor if its pre-tax income falls below the applicable threshold. In 2013, the poverty level was about \$23,600 for a family of two parents and two children, and about \$18,750 for a single parent with two children. Poverty thresholds are adjusted each year to account for inflation.

When determining whether a household is below poverty level, the official federal measure counts all sources of "cash income," including cash transfers such as Social Security and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The official measure does not count in-kind transfers such as benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or refundable tax credits such as the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Federal poverty guidelines, issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services, are a simplified version of the federal poverty level and are used to determine eligibility for various programs. For example, the income eligibility limit for SNAP is 130% of poverty level. The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program has an income limit of 185% of poverty level.

The Census Bureau's **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)** uses a definition of household income that includes in-kind transfers and refundable tax credits, while subtracting federal taxes, child care and other work-related expenses, and out-of-pocket medical expenses. The SPM also uses somewhat different poverty thresholds and makes adjustments for geographic differences in housing costs.

The SPM can be used to estimate the effectiveness of various government programs in alleviating poverty. For example, the SPM poverty rate for children in 2012 was 18%. Without SNAP benefits, the child poverty rate would have been 21%. Put differently, SNAP benefits reduced child poverty by 3 percentage points, which represents about 2.2 million children. Without the EITC and the refundable portion of the federal Child Tax Credit, the SPM poverty rate for children would have increased to 24.7%, a difference of almost 7 percentage points or about 4.9 million children. By contrast, TANF income assistance reduced child poverty by only one-half of a percentage point or about 370,000 children nationwide.

SPM poverty estimates from the Census Bureau begin with 2009 data. State-level data by age group are not readily available. Alternative policy measures similar to the SPM have been developed in some states (e.g., California and Wisconsin).

## Federal Poverty Thresholds for Households with Children, 2013

One adult, one child	\$16,057
One adult, two children	18,769
One adult, three children	23,707
Two adults, one child	18,751
Two adults, two children	23,624
Two adults, three children	27,801

## Endnotes

- 1 Harry J. Holzer et al., "The Economic Costs of Childhood Poverty in the United States," *Journal of Children and Poverty*, March 2008.
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# Children, Families, and Poverty

## HIGHLIGHTS

In 2013, 20.7% of Illinois children were in households with incomes below the federal poverty level (about \$18,750 for a family of three), compared with the pre-recession rate of 16.6%.

Poverty rates for children are highest among those under age 6. Early childhood poverty can be especially harmful for children's cognitive, social-emotional, and health outcomes later in life.

Some of the largest increases in child poverty rates since 2000 have been in economically distressed areas outside metropolitan Chicago. Such areas include Winnebago and Stephenson counties in northern Illinois, Macon and Vermilion counties in the central part of the state, and Marion County in the south.

More than 40% of single-mother families are below poverty level, compared with one-fourth of single-father families and less than one-tenth of married couples with children.

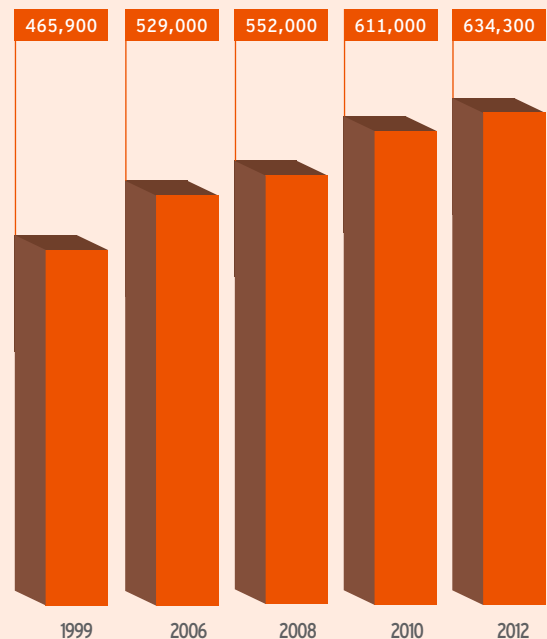
Family poverty rates are closely related to levels of educational attainment. In 2012, poverty rates were 27% for families with householders who had not completed high school, 14% for high school graduates, and 3% for those with college degrees.

The effects of the recession and longer-term economic changes have been harshest for the most disadvantaged demographic groups. Between 1999 and 2012, poverty rates increased from 35% to 45% for Black children in Illinois and from 20% to 29% for Latino children.

Black children are most likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty (defined as census tracts with overall poverty rates of 30% or more). In 2010, 40% of Black children in Illinois lived in concentrated poverty, compared with 30% nationwide.

### Illinois Children in Poverty

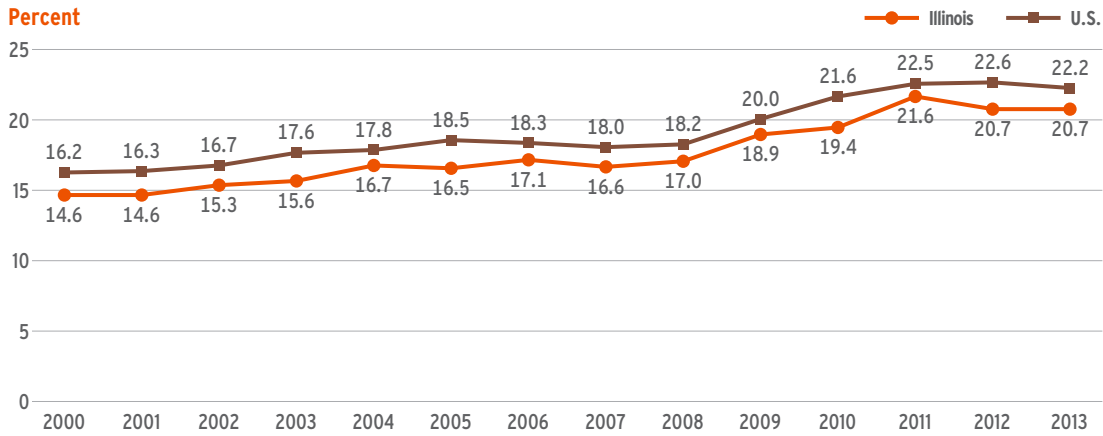
The number of Illinois children living in poverty has increased by one-third since 1999.



**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007, 2007-2009, 2009-2011, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).



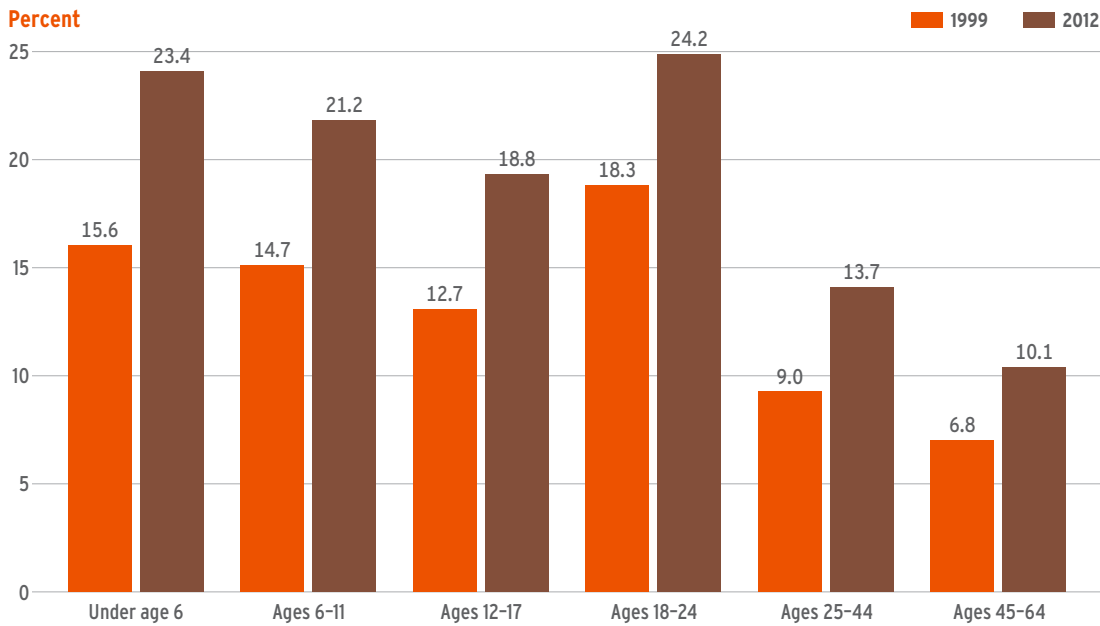
## Child Poverty Rates



**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 1995–2005; American Community Survey, 2006–2013.

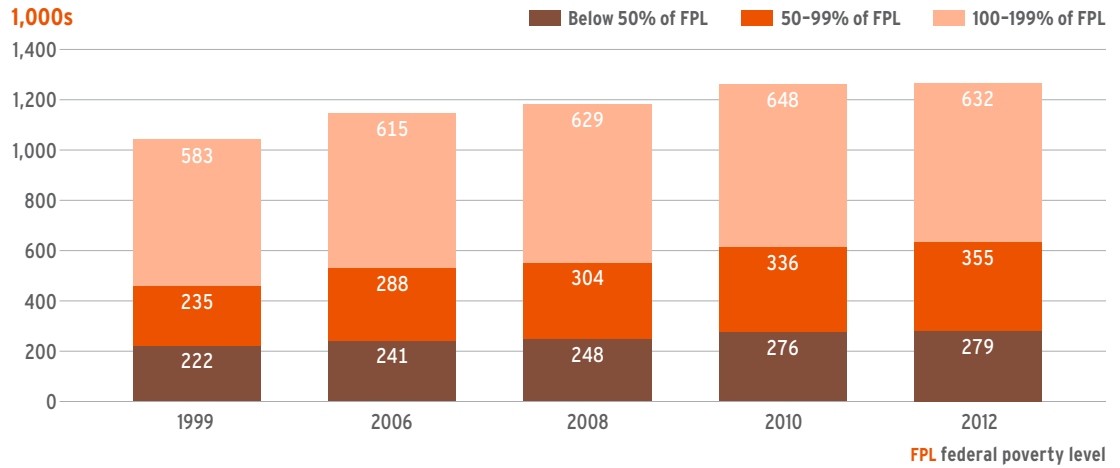
Child poverty rates nationwide declined significantly in the latter part of the 1990s (due largely to strong economic growth), increased gradually in the first part of the next decade, and rose sharply during the Great Recession. [U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey]

## Poverty Rates by Age



**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011–2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Children by Poverty Status



**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007, 2007-2009, 2009-2011, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

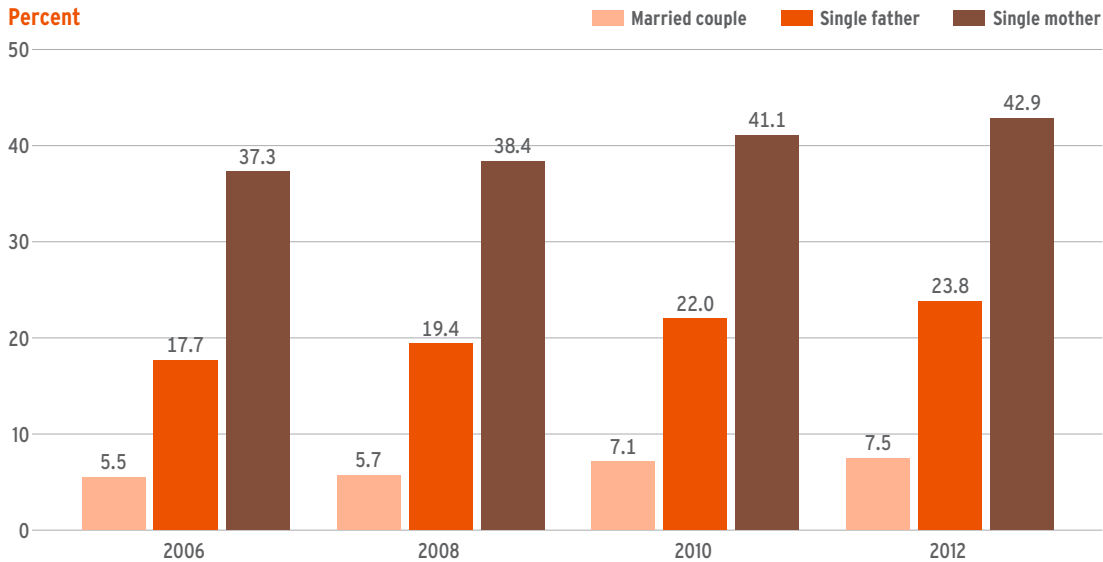
Deep poverty is defined as below 50% of FPL. Low-income is defined as below 200% of FPL.

## Selected Counties with Highest Poverty Rates

	Percent		
	1999	2012	Change
<b>North</b>			
Cook	19.3	26.0	6.7
Kankakee	15.9	25.5	9.6
Stephenson	12.1	29.1	17.0
Winnebago	13.3	27.1	13.8
<b>Central</b>			
Coles	11.9	26.8	14.9
Knox	17.5	32.5	15.1
Macon	19.2	28.4	9.1
Peoria	21.0	28.9	7.9
Sangamon	13.2	25.2	12.0
Vermilion	19.3	30.0	10.7
<b>South</b>			
Franklin	24.4	25.0	0.6
Jackson	23.6	33.7	10.2
Marion	17.3	30.5	13.2
St. Clair	21.9	30.3	8.4

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Poverty Rates for Families with Own Children by Family Type

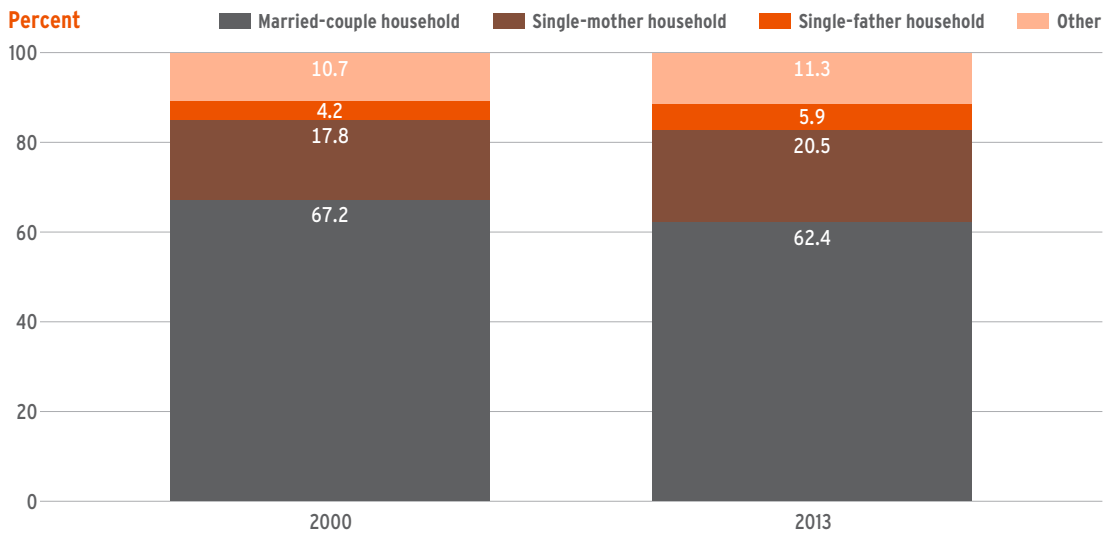


**NOTE** "Own children" refers to the biological, step, or adopted children of a householder (i.e., one of the people who owns or rents a residence).

**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2007, 2007-2009, 2009-2011, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

About half of all single mothers have never been married; the remainder are divorced, separated, or widowed.  
[U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey]

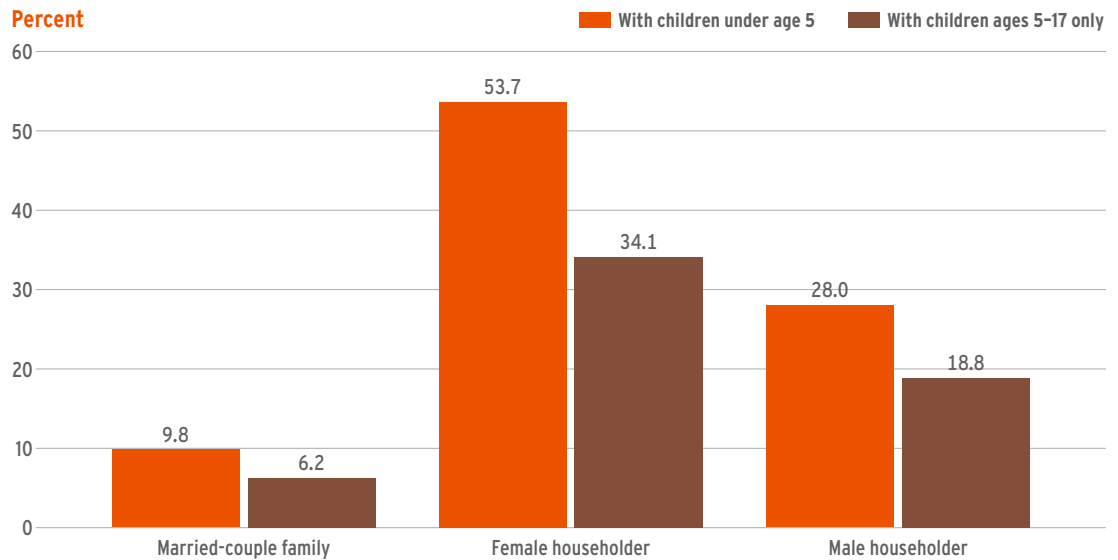
## Household Living Arrangements for Children



**NOTE** "Other" includes householders who are grandparents, other relatives, or non-relatives.

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2013.

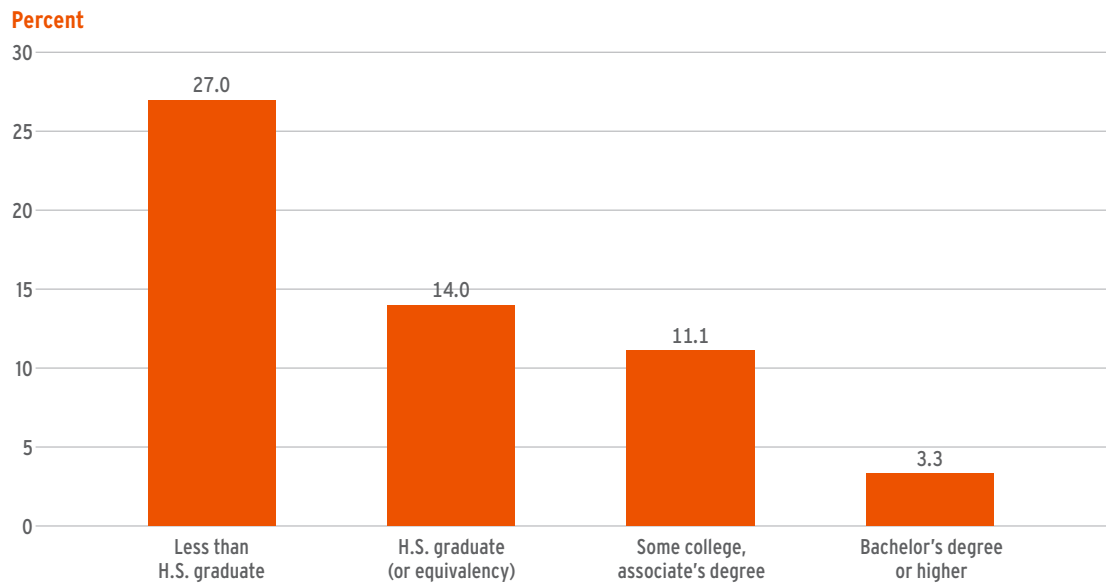
### Poverty Rates for Families with Related Children, 2012



**NOTE** "Related children" refers to children who are related to a householder (i.e., one of the people who owns or rents a residence).

**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

### Family Poverty Rates by Educational Attainment of Householder, 2012

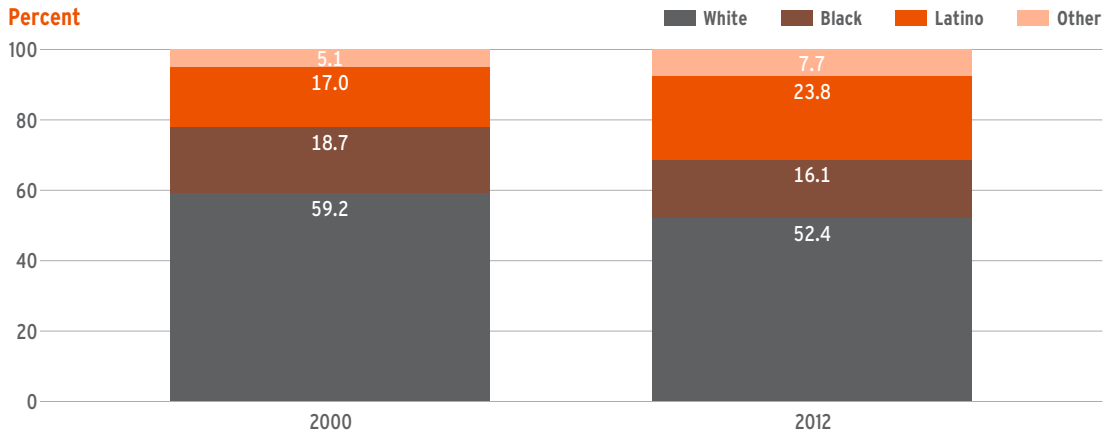


**NOTE** Includes families with and without children.

**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).



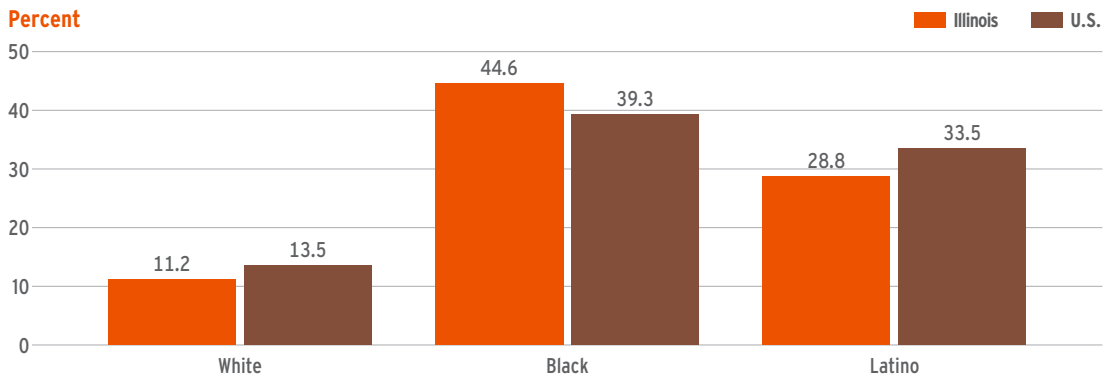
### Child Population by Race-Ethnicity



**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

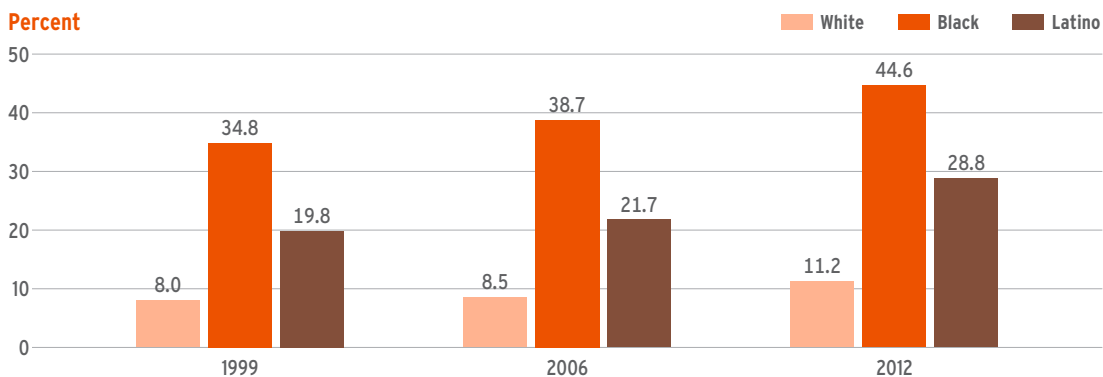
Census Bureau data on race and ethnicity are based on self-identification by survey respondents. People who identify as Latino or Hispanic may be of any race. In this report, "White" refers to non-Hispanic Whites.

### Child Poverty Rates by Race-Ethnicity, 2012



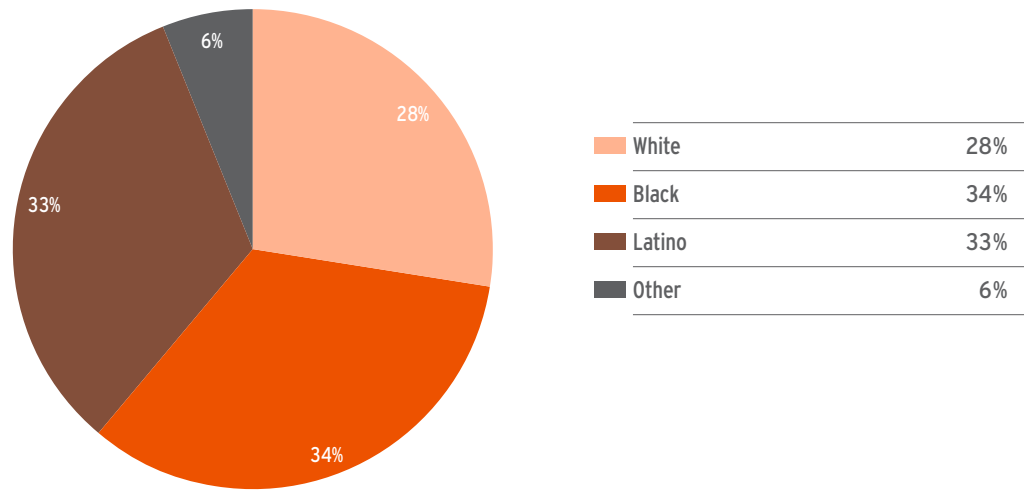
**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

### Trends in Child Poverty Rates by Race-Ethnicity



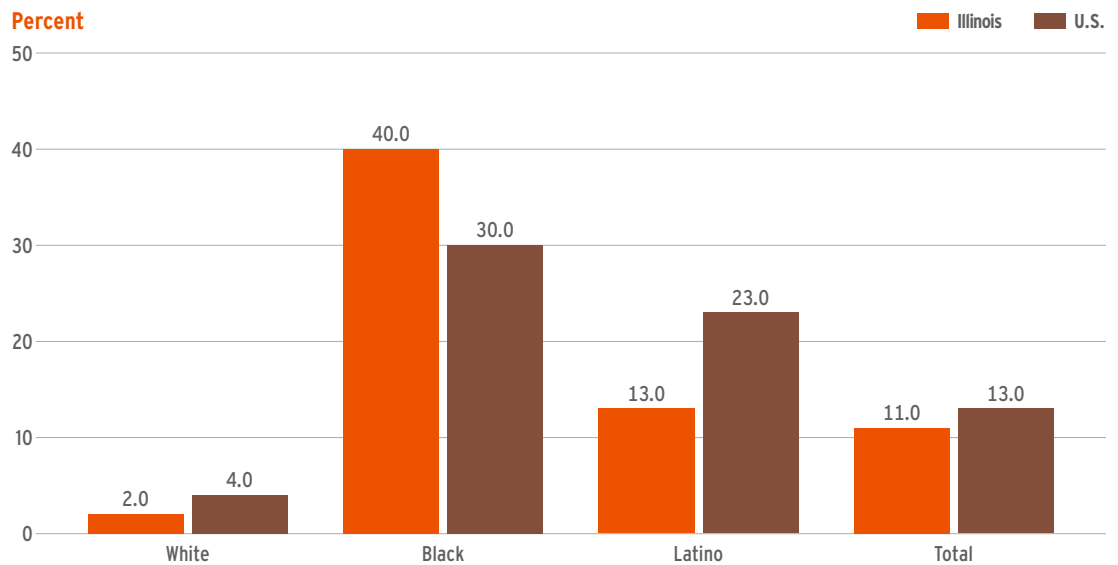
**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Child Poverty Population by Race-Ethnicity, 2012



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Children Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty by Race-Ethnicity, 2010



NOTE Concentrated poverty defined as a census tract with an overall poverty rate of 30% or more.

SOURCE Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center; based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008-2012 (5-year pooled data).

The adverse effects of poverty are magnified for children living in areas of concentrated poverty. Families in high-poverty communities often experience harmful levels of stress, higher crime rates, worse health outcomes, underperforming schools, and limited job opportunities. [Elizabeth Kneebone, "The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012" (Brookings Institution, July 2014)]

# Child Poverty in Metropolitan Chicago

## HIGHLIGHTS

The geographic distribution of child poverty in Illinois has changed significantly. The city of Chicago accounted for 46% of the state's child poverty population in 1999 but only 33% in 2012. The share in the metropolitan suburbs rose from 22% in 1999 to 33% in 2012.

In 2012, child poverty rates were 35% in Chicago, 17% in suburban Cook County, 13% in the collar counties, and 21% in the rest of the state.

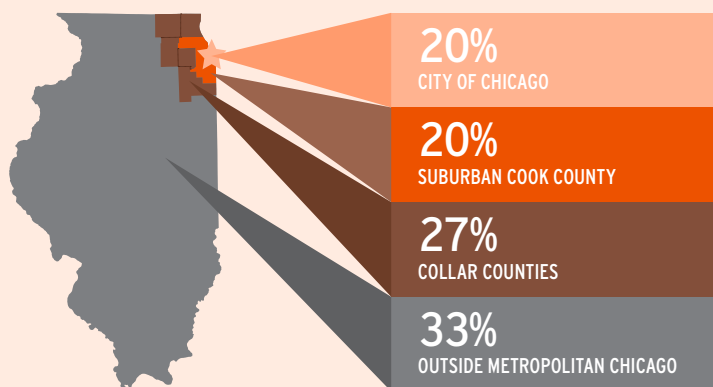
Suburban municipalities with child poverty rates above 30% include Blue Island, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Harvey, and Maywood in Cook County; Addison and West Chicago in DuPage County; and North Chicago and Waukegan in Lake County.

Within Chicago, child poverty rates are highest (above 40%) on the west and south sides of the city. In suburban Cook, child poverty rates are highest in the southern and western parts of the county and lowest in the northern and northwestern suburbs. Child poverty rates in the collar counties range from about 10% in DuPage to 18% in Kane.

The child poverty population in Illinois is about 34% Black, 33% Latino, and 28% White, but the racial-ethnic distribution varies in different parts of the state. In Chicago, about half of all children in poverty are Black. In suburban Cook and the collar counties, Latinos are the largest group. Outside metropolitan Chicago, the majority of poor children are White.

## Geographic Distribution of Child Population, 2013

Between 2000 and 2010, the total child population in the city of Chicago declined by 138,000.



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

In this report, metropolitan Chicago is defined as Cook County and the five collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will).

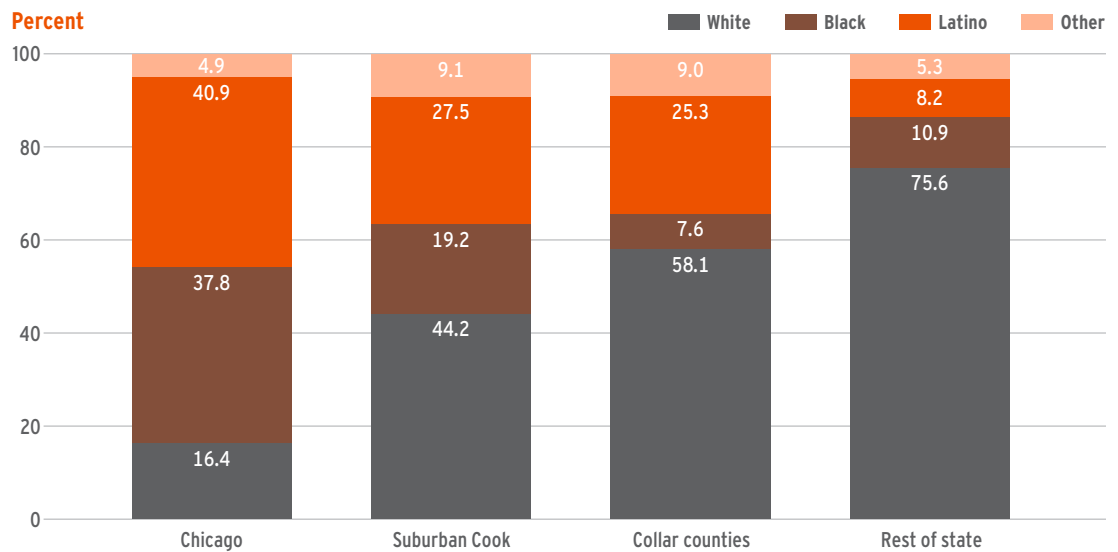
Between 2000 and 2010, the numbers of both White children and Black children in metropolitan Chicago declined by 17%, while the Latino child population increased by 26%.

## Changes in Child Population in Metropolitan Chicago

	1,000s			Percent Change		1,000s			Percent Change
	2000	2010	Change			2000	2010	Change	
<b>Chicago</b>	760	622	-138	-18.2	<b>Collar counties</b>	783	850	68	8.7
White	122	102	-20	-16.5	White	558	494	-63	-11.4
Black	334	235	-100	-29.8	Black	52	64	13	24.2
Latino	265	254	-11	-4.1	Latino	124	215	91	73.3
Other	38	30	-8	-19.9	Other	49	76	28	56.4
<b>Suburban Cook</b>	638	611	-27	-4.3	<b>Rest of state</b>	1,065	1,046	-18	-1.7
White	360	270	-90	-25.1	White	880	791	-89	-10.2
Black	116	117	1	0.8	Black	106	115	9	8.4
Latino	117	168	51	43.5	Latino	46	85	40	86.4
Other	45	56	11	24.5	Other	33	56	23	68.2

SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and Census 2010.

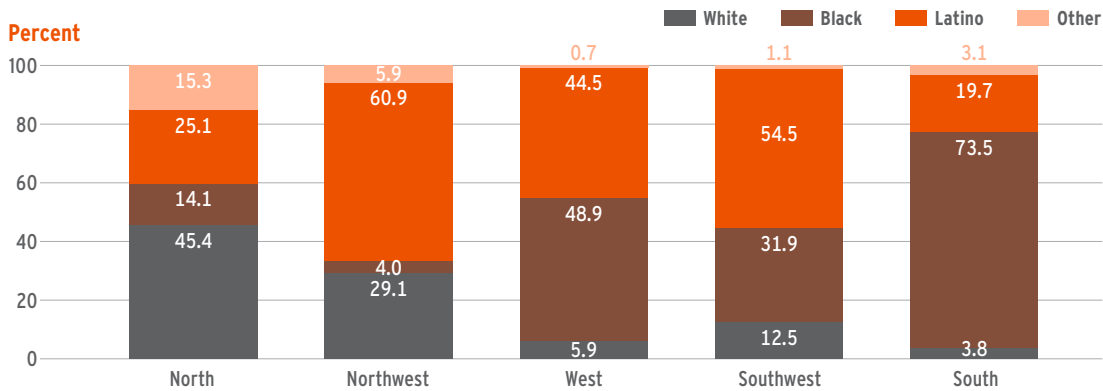
## Child Population by Race-Ethnicity in Metropolitan Chicago, 2010



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

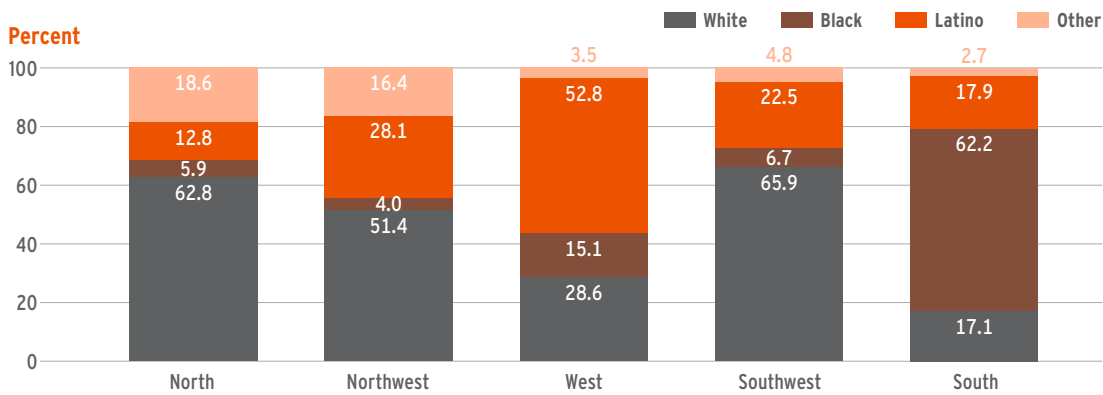


### Child Population by Race-Ethnicity in City of Chicago, 2010



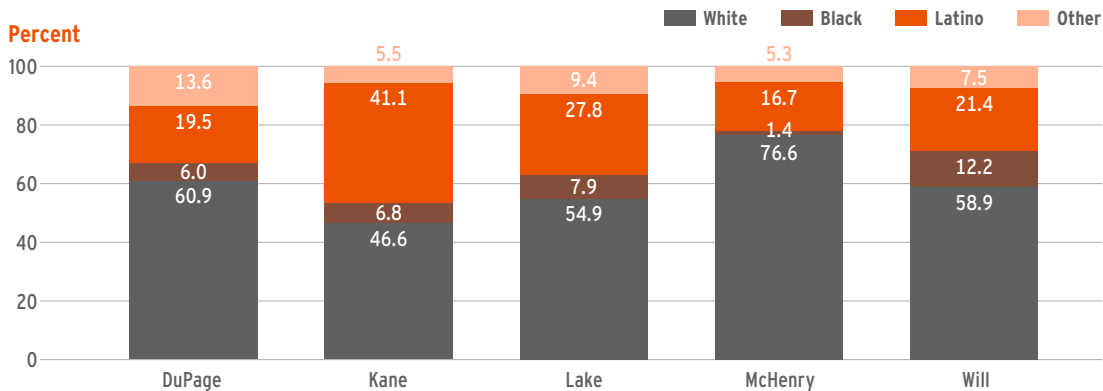
SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

### Child Population by Race-Ethnicity in Suburban Cook County, 2010



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

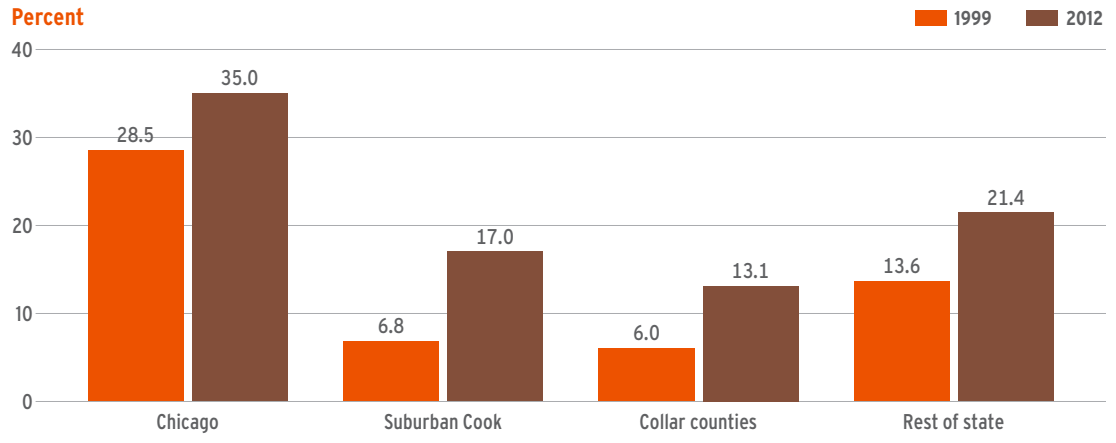
### Child Population by Race-Ethnicity in Collar Counties, 2010



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

The child poverty rate in Chicago is typical of other major cities. Among the nation's ten largest cities, seven have child poverty rates in the range of 30-39%. In the Midwest, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Milwaukee, and St. Louis have child poverty rates above 40%.

### Child Poverty Rates



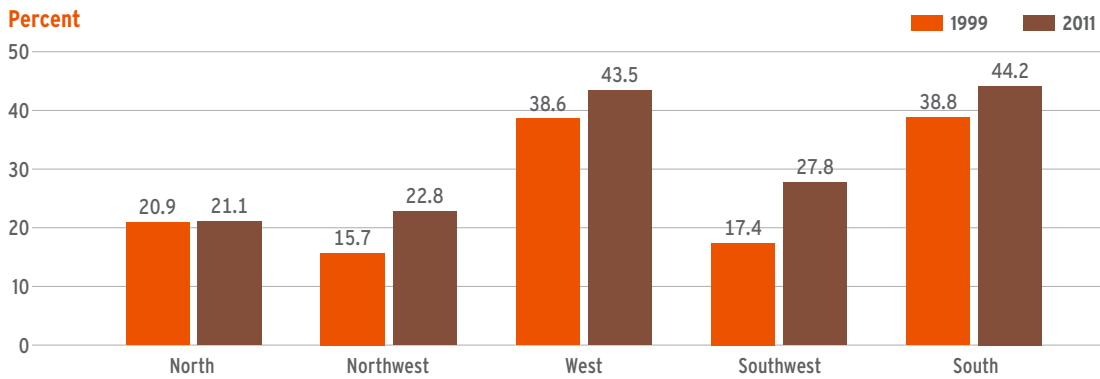
**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

### Selected Municipalities with High Child Poverty Rates, 2012

Percent		Percent	
<b>Cook County</b>		<b>DuPage County</b>	
Berwyn	20.6	Addison	31.1
Blue Island	37.2	Glendale Heights	23.9
Burbank	22.2	West Chicago	33.8
Calumet City	35.6	<b>Kane County</b>	
Chicago	35.0	Aurora	20.8
Chicago Heights	38.5	Carpentersville	29.1
Cicero	29.9	Elgin	22.8
Dolton	34.9	<b>Lake County</b>	
Harvey	56.6	North Chicago	36.8
Maywood	31.8	Round Lake Beach	21.4
Melrose Park	26.4	Waukegan	34.3
Niles	26.7	Zion	27.9
Oak Lawn	20.6	<b>McHenry County</b>	
		Woodstock	25.3

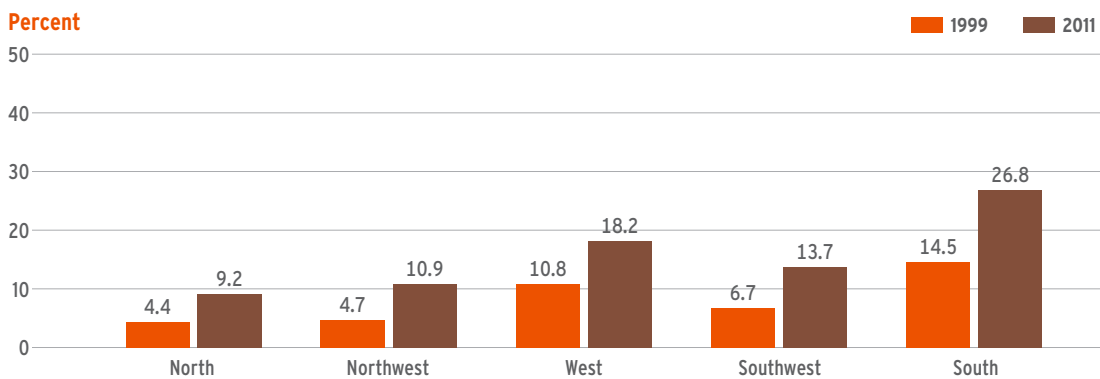
**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

### Child Poverty Rates in City of Chicago



SOURCES U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2009-2013 (5-year pooled data).

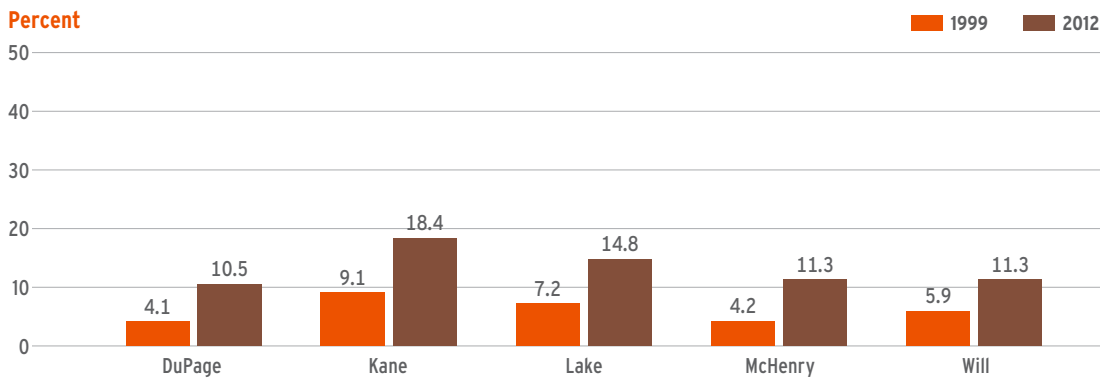
### Child Poverty Rates in Suburban Cook County



SOURCES U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2009-2013 (5-year pooled data).

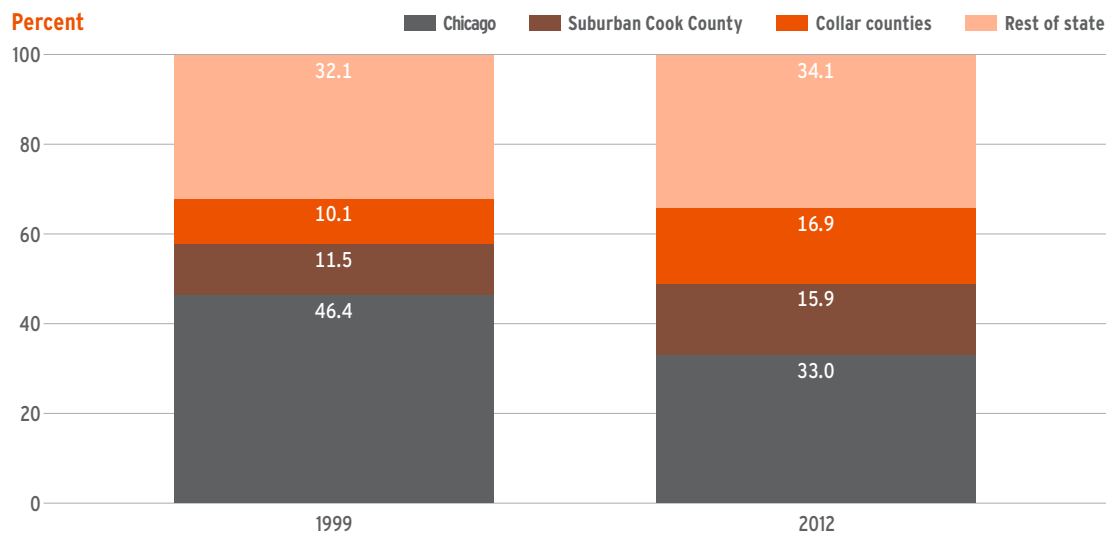
Since 1999, the child poverty population has increased by 95% in suburban Cook County and more than doubled in the collar counties. The trend toward the suburbanization of poverty can be found in many other metropolitan areas across the nation.

### Child Poverty Rates in Collar Counties



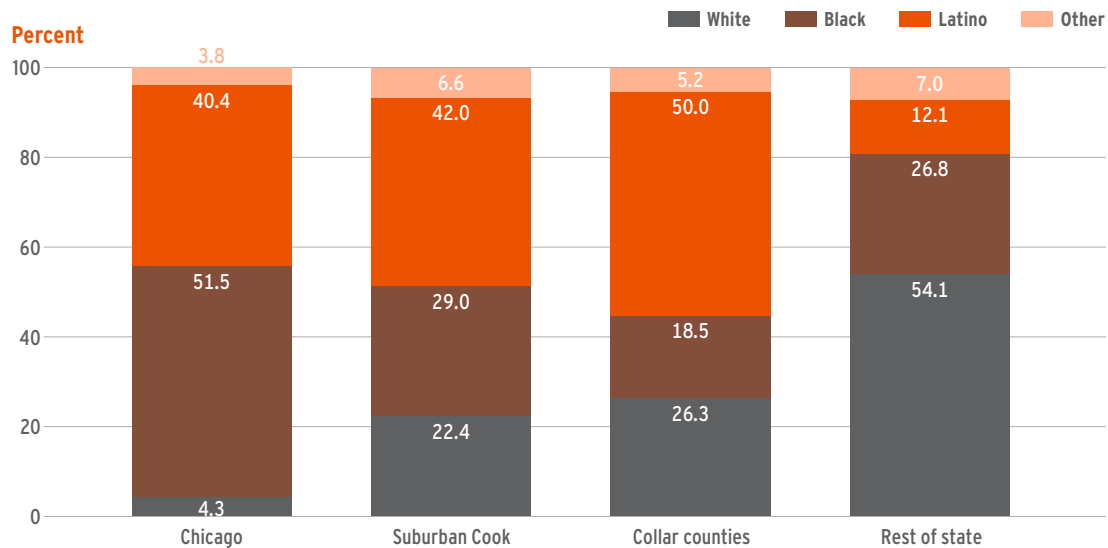
SOURCES U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Geographic Distribution of Child Poverty Population



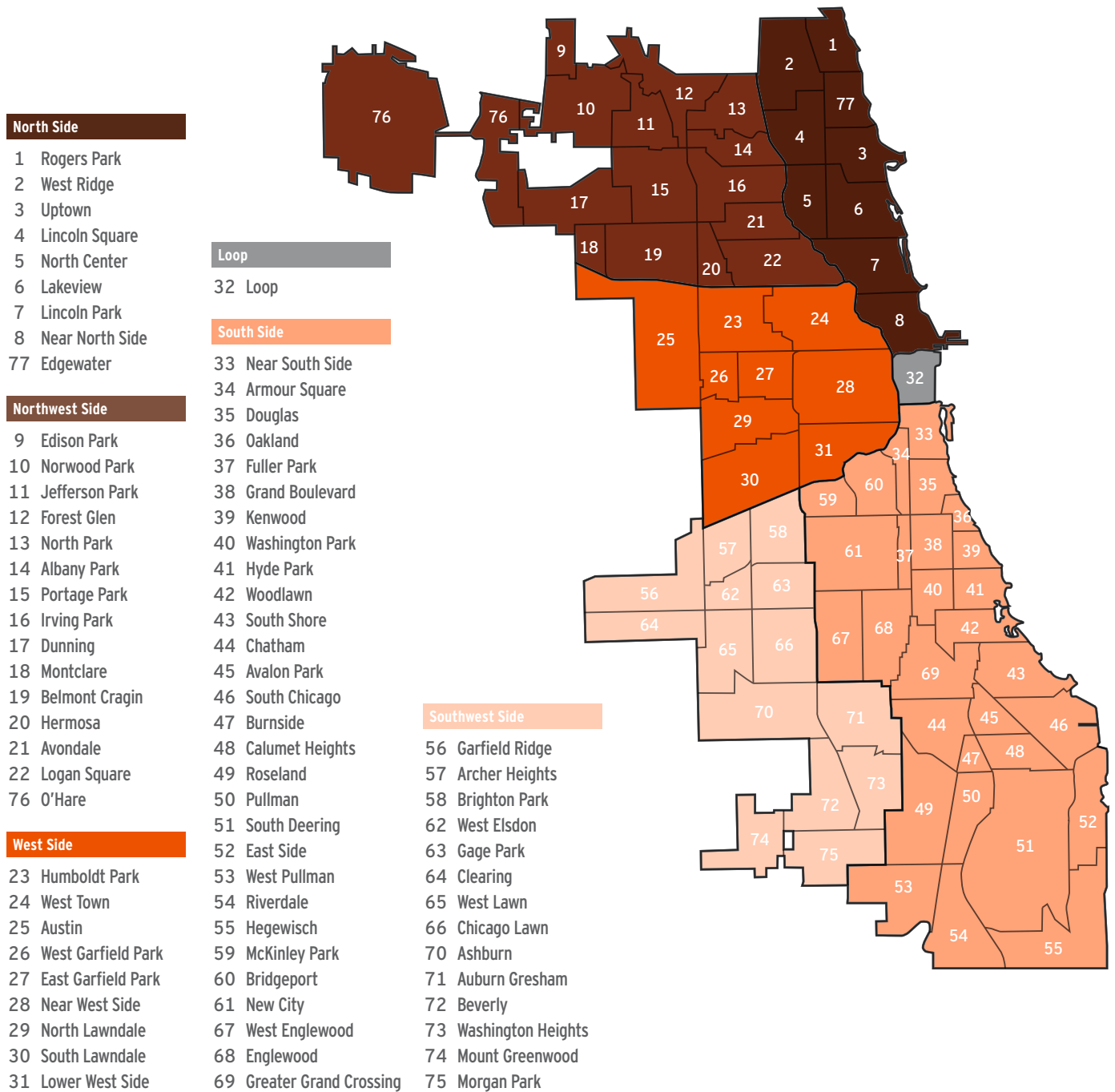
SOURCES U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Child Poverty Population by Race-Ethnicity, 2012



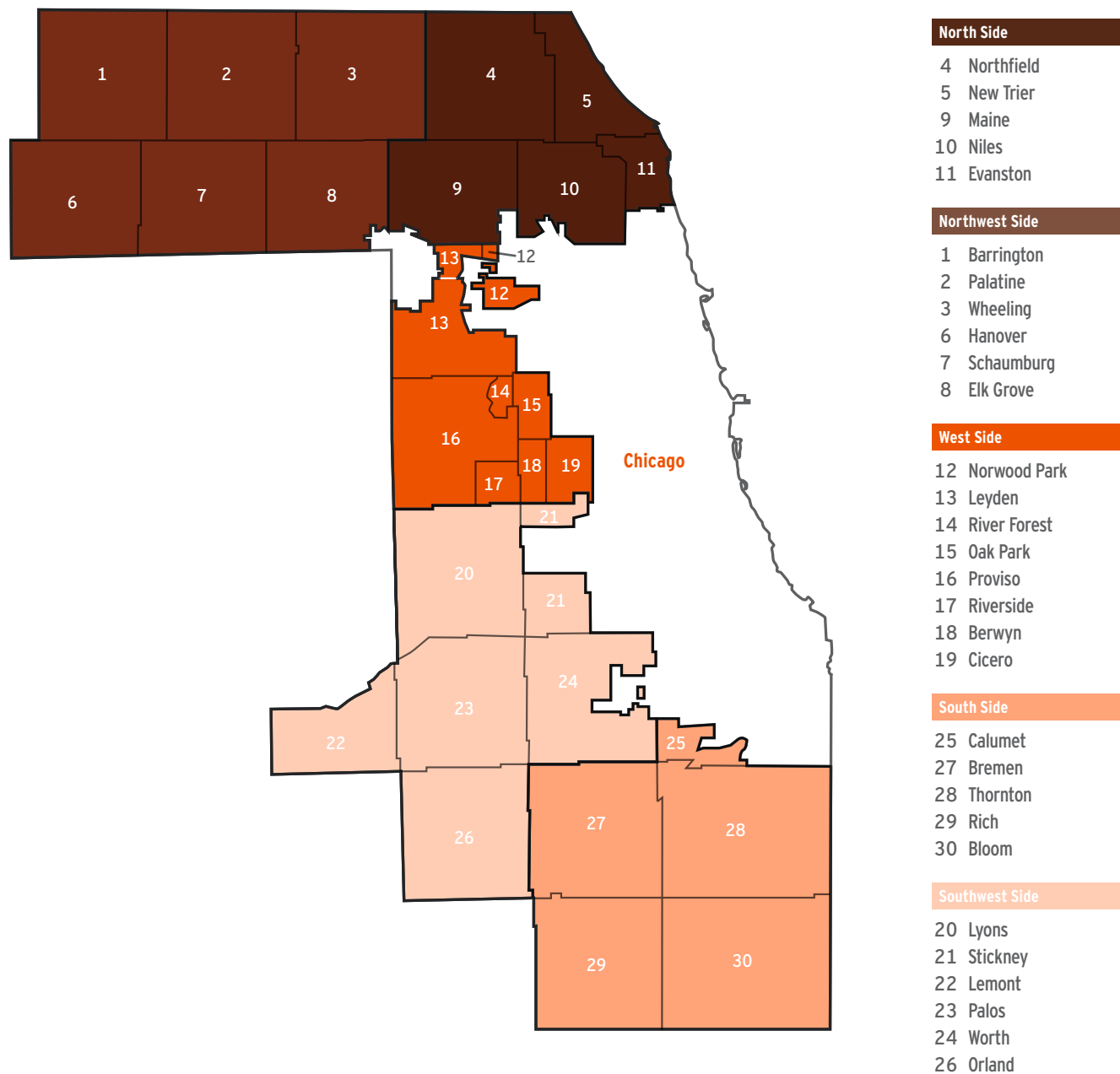
SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Community Areas in Chicago





## Suburban Cook County by Township



# Employment and Family Income

## HIGHLIGHTS

The unemployment rate in Illinois peaked at 10.5% during the Great Recession and declined to 7.3% in 2014.

Some parts of the state had unemployment rates above 10% for five consecutive years (2009-2013)—for example, Franklin, Macon, Vermilion, and Winnebago counties.

Between 2000 and 2013, Illinois employment declined by 33% in the manufacturing sector and by 29% in the construction sector.

Since 1999, median earnings for full-time, year-round workers have not kept pace with inflation. Median earnings for women are about one-third lower than median earnings for men, regardless of educational attainment level.

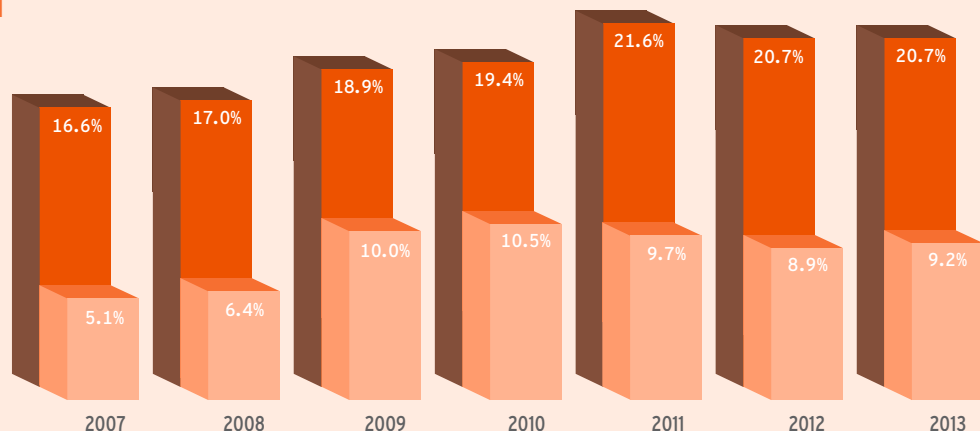
Median income for families with children has not kept pace with inflation. Between 1999 and 2013, median income (adjusted for inflation) declined about 20% for single-mother households, 18% for single-father households, and 4% for two-parent households.

Among all families (with and without children), median income, adjusted for inflation, has declined 22% for Black families and 20% for Latino families since 1999.

## Unemployment and Child Poverty Rates in Illinois

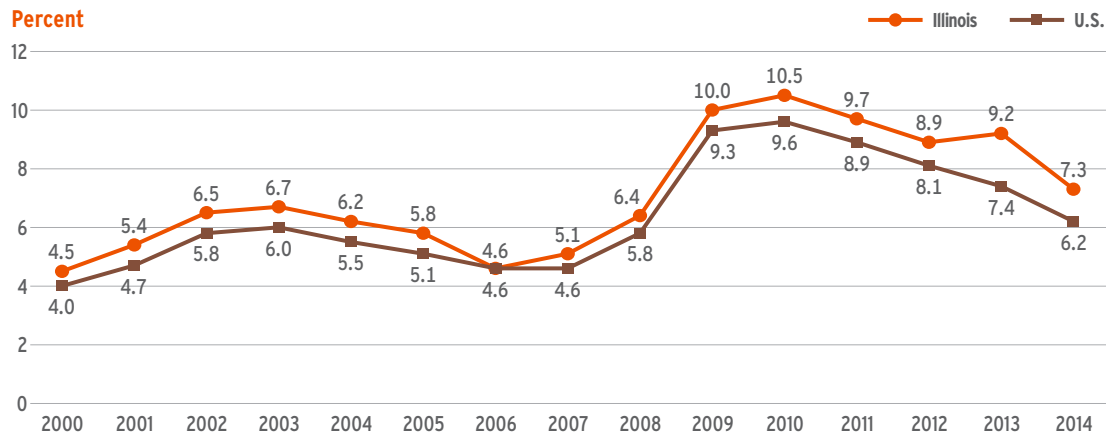
Child poverty rates rose sharply during the Great Recession and were still above 20% as the economy began to recover.

■ Child poverty  
■ Unemployment



SOURCES Illinois Department of Employment Security and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

## Unemployment Rates



The unemployment rate is the percentage of individuals in the labor force who are jobless, looking for work, and available for work.

SOURCE Illinois Department of Employment Security.

## Selected Counties with High Unemployment Rates

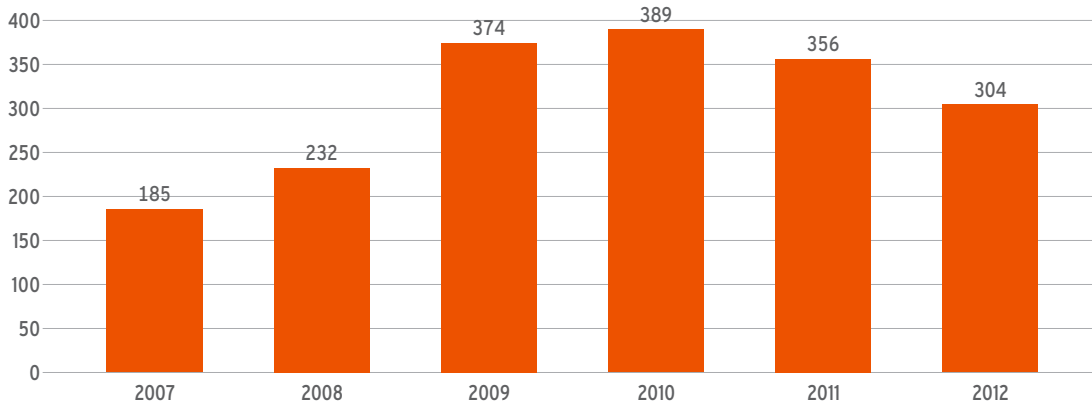
	Percent unemployed				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>North</b>					
Boone	15.1	15.9	13.4	11.8	11.5
Grundy	12.0	12.3	11.8	10.3	10.9
Kankakee	12.0	13.3	12.0	11.2	11.3
LaSalle	12.0	13.1	11.4	11.0	11.4
Ogle	12.2	13.5	12.1	10.9	10.7
Winnebago	14.8	15.3	12.7	11.6	11.6
<b>Central</b>					
Macon	11.3	11.9	10.5	10.7	12.2
Vermilion	11.3	12.4	10.5	10.0	11.6
<b>South</b>					
Franklin	12.8	13.0	11.6	11.2	12.7
Marion	11.7	12.2	11.0	11.0	11.5
Montgomery	11.7	13.3	12.5	12.0	11.7

NOTE Includes selected counties with unemployment rates above 10% for five consecutive years.

SOURCE Illinois Department of Employment Security.

### Children with At Least One Unemployed Parent

1,000s



**SOURCE** Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center; based on data from the American Community Survey.

Families with children can be devastated by long-term unemployment. During the recession, the poverty rate for parents unemployed for six months or more was 35%, compared with 12% before losing their jobs. [Julia Isaacs, "Unemployment from a Child's Perspective" (Urban Institute, March 2013)]

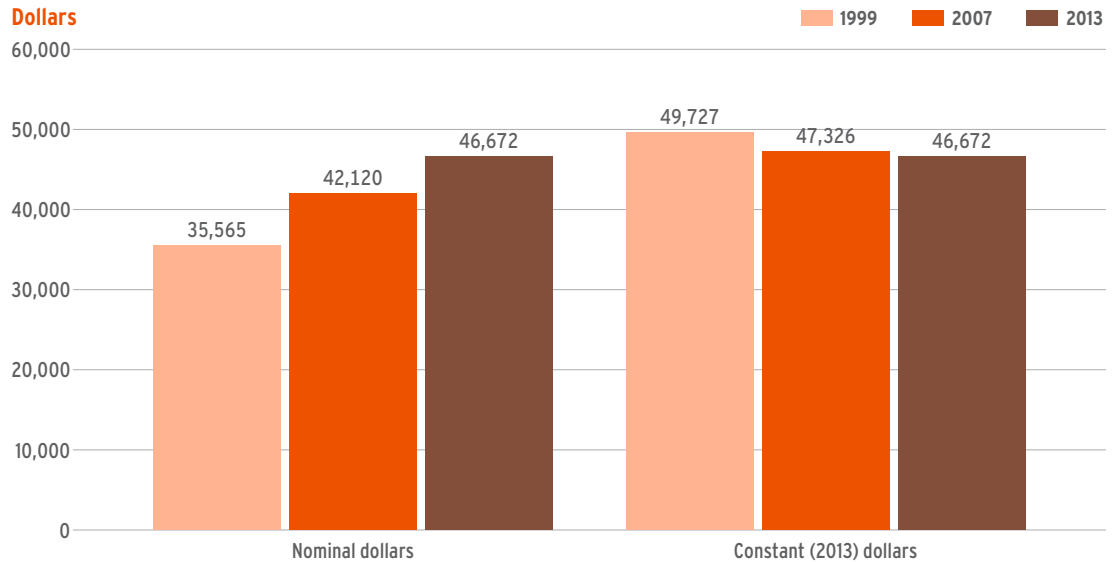
### Employment by Business Sector

	Employees (in 1,000s)		Percent change
	2000	2013	
<b>Private sector</b>	5,205	4,968	-4.6
Manufacturing	871	580	-33.4
Construction	270	191	-29.3
Retail trade	651	601	-7.7
Wholesale trade	321	298	-7.0
Professional & business services	843	883	4.8
Finance & insurance	318	295	-7.5
Health care & social assistance	575	723	25.7
Accommodation & food services	410	467	13.8
Other private sector	947	931	-1.7
<b>Public sector</b>	840	829	-1.3
<b>Total non-farm employment</b>	6,045	5,797	-4.1

**SOURCE** Illinois Department of Employment Security, Current Employment Statistics Program.

Between 1990 and 2013, employment in the manufacturing sector declined by 32% nationwide and by 37% in Illinois. [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics]

### Median Earnings for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers

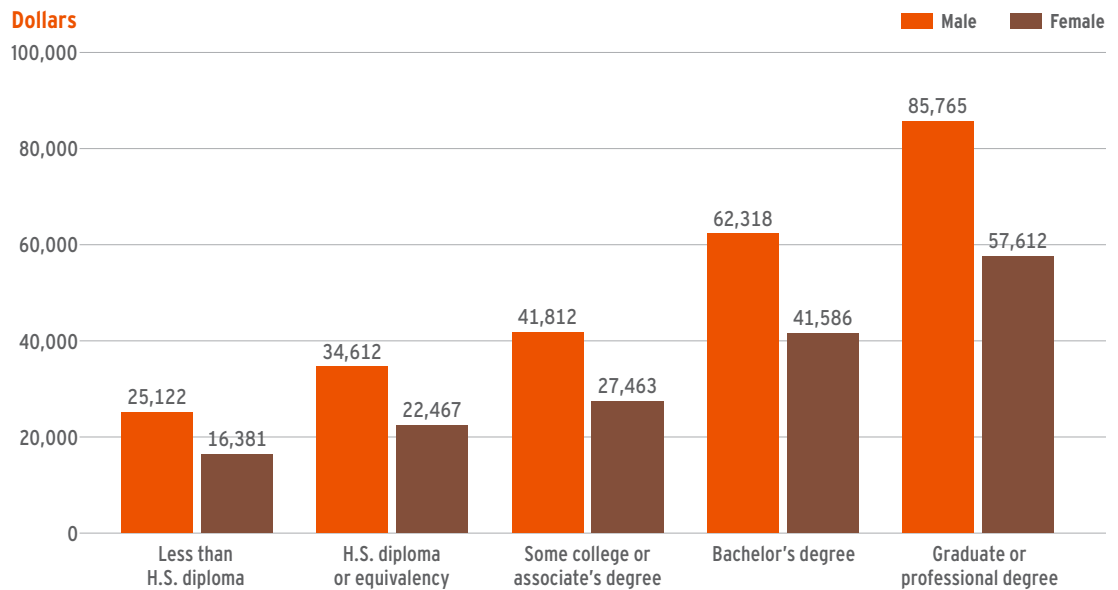


“Nominal dollars” (also called “current dollars”) are amounts that have not been adjusted for inflation. “Constant dollars” (also called “real dollars”) are inflation-adjusted amounts.

**NOTE** Includes population 16 years and over.

**SOURCES** Census 2000 and American Community Survey.

### Median Earnings by Educational Attainment and Gender, 2013



**NOTE** Includes population 25 years and over.

**SOURCE** American Community Survey.



### Median Income for Families with Own Children by Family Type

	1999	2013	Percent change (adjusted for inflation)
Married-couple households	\$65,628	\$88,472	-3.6
Single-mother households	22,200	24,790	-20.1
Single-father households	32,281	37,184	-17.6
All families with own children	54,639	66,254	-13.3

**NOTE** Families with own children are defined as households with children under 18 who are sons or daughters of the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2013.

### Median Family Income by Race-Ethnicity

	1999	2013	Percent change (adjusted for inflation)
White	\$60,970	\$79,596	-6.6
Black	36,319	39,797	-21.6
Latino	41,537	46,364	-20.2
All families	55,545	69,557	-10.4

**NOTE** Includes families with and without children.

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2013.

# Effects of Child Poverty

## HIGHLIGHTS

On a variety of health indicators, both children and parents in poverty fare worse than those at higher income levels. Young children are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of severe stress in families that are struggling to make ends meet.

Access to early childhood education varies significantly by family income. Among children ages 3-4 in Illinois, 44% of low-income children are enrolled in preschool, compared with 60% of those at higher income levels.

There are wide gaps in academic achievement based on family income. In 2013, for example, 43% of low-income children in Illinois met or exceeded state standards in third-grade reading, compared with 77% of children at higher income levels.

Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in Illinois have increased by 27% since 2006.

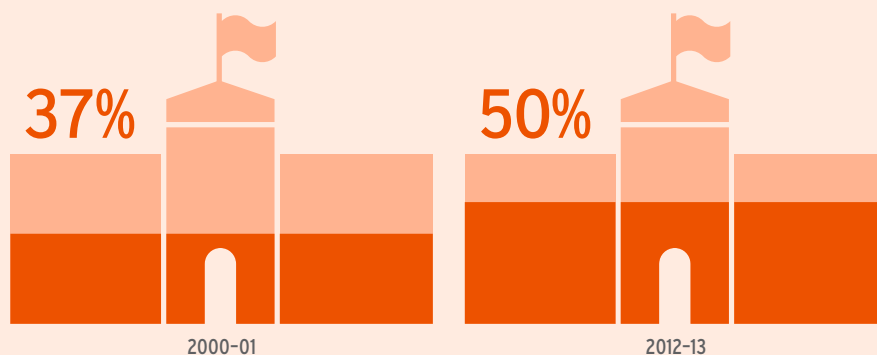
A study of Illinois youth who had been in foster care found that at age 26, only 3% had college degrees and only 67% had any income from employment during the previous year.

In 2013, the youth unemployment rate in Illinois exceeded 28%, up from 11% in 2006.

Since 2008, juvenile arrests have dropped 43%, while juvenile detention admissions have declined 24%.

### Low-Income Student Enrollment in Illinois Public Schools

Nationwide data on academic achievement over the past three decades show a growing gap between children from low-income families and those from affluent families.



**NOTE** Low-income defined as income below 185% of poverty level.

**SOURCE** Illinois State Board of Education.

### Health Indicators for Children by Income Level

Percent	Below 100% FPL	100-199% FPL	200-399% FPL	400% FPL or higher
Children receiving coordinated care within a medical home	28	48	64	72
Children's health reported as excellent/very good	70	74	91	95
Children (ages 4 months to 5 years) at risk for developmental, behavioral, or social delays	42	39	28	23

FPL federal poverty level

**NOTE** The concept of a "medical home" involves having a usual source of coordinated, ongoing, and comprehensive health care.

**SOURCE** National Survey of Children's Health, 2011/12.

Children in poverty are more likely to have chronic or acute health conditions, and they miss more days of school due to illness or injury.

### Health Indicators for Parents by Income Level

Percent	Below 100% FPL	100-199% FPL	200-399% FPL	400% FPL or higher
Mothers who report excellent/very good physical health	44	49	75	79
Mothers who report excellent/very good mental and emotional health	54	66	81	82
Parent who usually or always feels stress from parenting	23	13	8	7

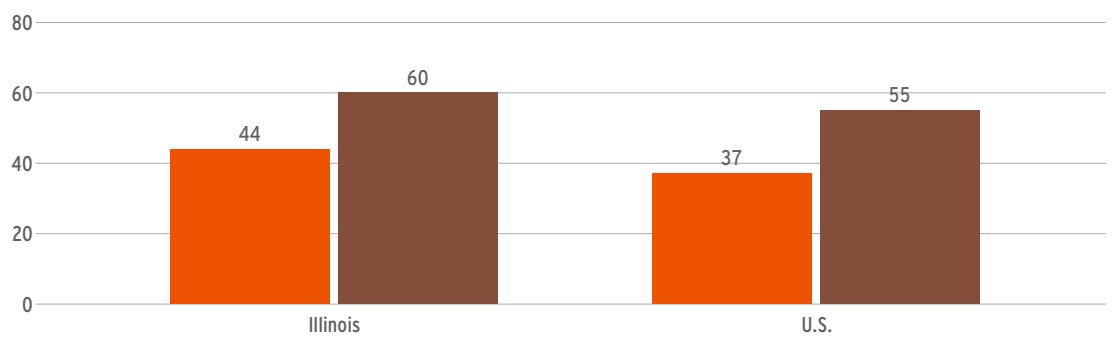
FPL federal poverty level

**SOURCE** National Survey of Children's Health, 2011/12.

Children in poverty are less ready for school at age 5, less likely to perform well in elementary school, and more likely to drop out of high school. Nationwide data over the past three decades show a growing gap in academic achievement between the poorest and most affluent children.

### Children Ages 3-4 Enrolled in Preschool, 2011

Percent enrolled

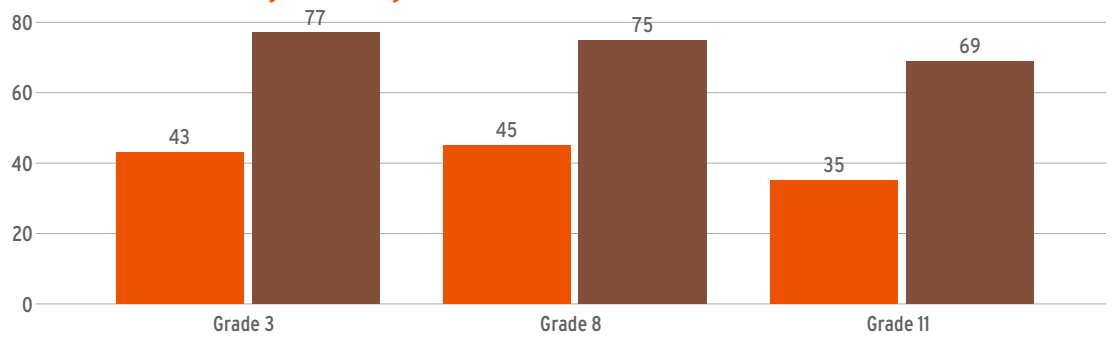


**NOTE** Low-income defined as below 200% of federal poverty level.

**SOURCE** Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center; based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012 (3-year pooled data).

### Reading Achievement by Income Level, 2013

Percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards

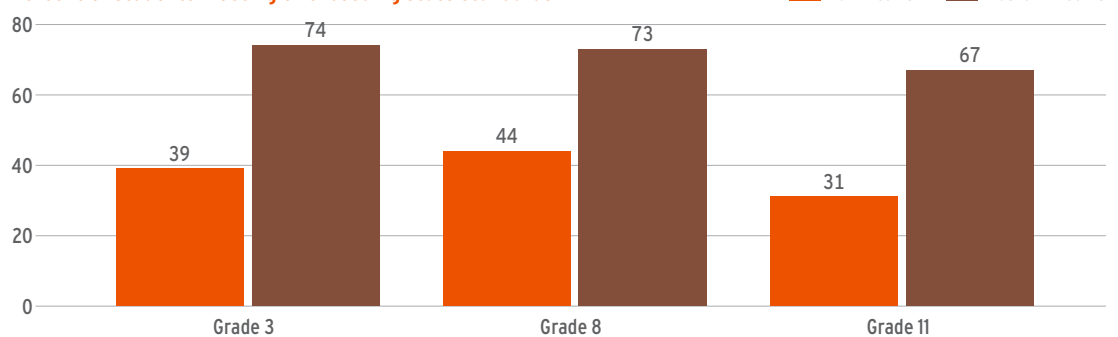


**NOTE** Low-income defined as below 185% of poverty level.

**SOURCE** Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Grades 3 & 8) and Prairie State Achievement Test (Grade 11).

### Math Achievement by Income Level, 2013

Percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards

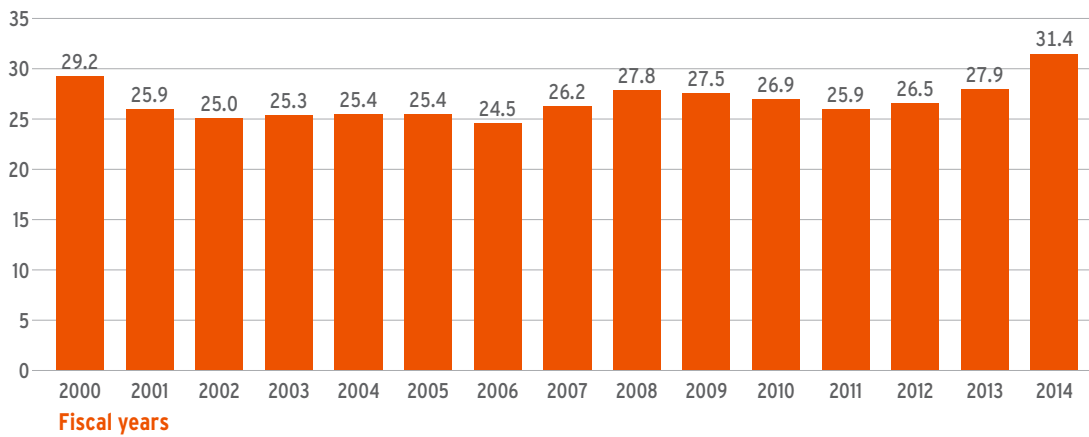


**NOTE** Low-income defined as below 185% of poverty level.

**SOURCE** Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Grades 3 & 8) and Prairie State Achievement Test (Grade 11).

## Substantiated Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect

1,000s



SOURCE Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect have increased more than 25% statewide since 2006. In some counties (e.g., Kane, Macon, Vermilion, Will, and Winnebago), the increase has exceeded 50%.

## Outcomes for Former Foster Youth at Age 26

	Illinois (former foster youth)	Comparison group (all youth)
<b>Education</b>		
No H.S. diploma or equivalency	22%	6%
H.S. diploma or equivalency only	33%	22%
One or more years of college, but no degree	37%	26%
2-year college degree	5%	10%
4-year college degree or higher	3%	23%
<b>Employment during past year</b>		
Percent with income from employment	67%	94%
Mean earnings	\$12,588	\$32,312
Median Earnings	\$8,000	\$27,319

NOTE The comparison group is a representative sample from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

SOURCE Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (data from 2010–2011).



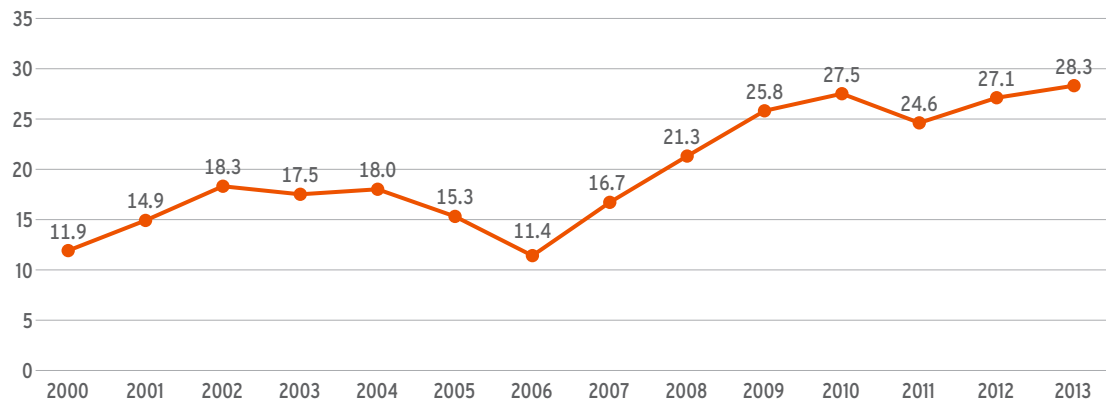
Youth unemployment rates indicate the percentage of individuals in the labor force who are out of work and looking for work. Those not in the labor force because they are in school (or for other reasons) are not included.

As result of having less work experience and fewer opportunities to gain skills, unemployed youth are likely to have lower earnings in the future. Youth unemployment also has negative effects on long-term economic growth. [Sarah Ayres, "The High Cost of Youth Unemployment" (Center for American Progress, April 2013)]

Juvenile detention is defined as the temporary care of a minor alleged or adjudicated as delinquent who requires secure custody for his or her own or the community's protection.

## Youth Unemployment, Ages 16-19

### Percent unemployed



SOURCE Illinois Department of Employment Security.

## Juvenile Arrests and Juvenile Detention, Ages 10-17

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percent change 2008-2013
<b>Juvenile arrests</b>							
Cook County	43,877	40,545	35,605	32,701	29,712	27,984	-36.2
All other counties	30,335	27,355	21,153	18,766	17,298	14,001	-53.8
Statewide	74,212	67,900	56,758	51,467	47,010	41,985	-43.4
<b>Admissions into juvenile detention</b>							
Cook County	5,825	5,611	5,218	4,833	4,207	4,199	-27.9
All other counties	9,396	8,214	8,401	7,895	7,668	7,433	-20.9
Statewide	15,221	13,825	13,619	12,728	11,875	11,632	-23.6

SOURCE Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

# Policies and Programs for Low-Income Families

## HIGHLIGHTS

More than 1.6 million Illinois children are covered by Medicaid and related medical assistance programs. About 95% of these children are from families with incomes below 200% of poverty level (about \$37,500 for a family of three).

More than one million Illinois households receive the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). About 75% of these households have incomes below \$25,000. In 2013, the EITC moved an estimated 130,000 Illinois children above poverty level (about \$18,750 for a family of three).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves nearly 900,000 Illinois children each month. In 2013, SNAP moved an estimated 69,000 Illinois children above poverty level and about 103,000 out of deep poverty.

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program serves more than 160,000 children each month. Access to the program was narrowed in 2011, when the income eligibility ceiling was lowered from 200% to 185% of poverty level. Required family co-payments were increased substantially in both 2011 and 2012. For a single parent with two children at 150% of poverty level, co-payments more than doubled.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in Illinois responded slowly to the rise in child poverty during the recession. The average monthly number of TANF families reached 50,000 in FY 2013, which was still lower than in FY 2002.

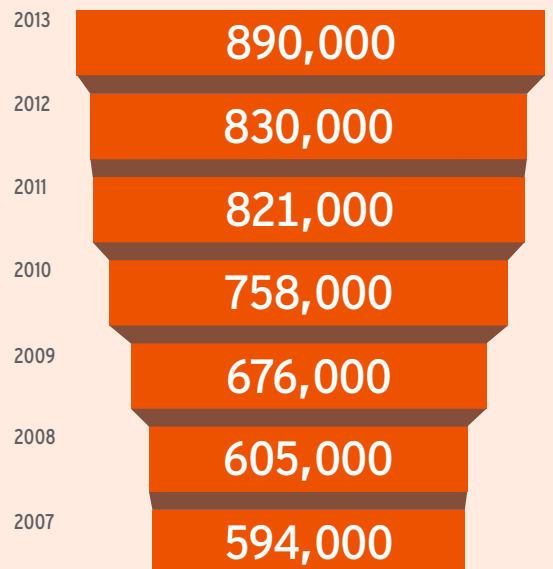
State funding for preschool has been cut by 25% since FY 2009. In FY 2014, state-funded preschool programs served about 75,000 children, down from 95,000 five years earlier.

As a result of state budget cuts, participation in Teen REACH afterschool programs has declined by more than 50% since FY 2007.

The Monetary Award Program (MAP) provides financial assistance to low-income college students in Illinois. The maximum MAP grant covered average tuition and fees at state universities in FY 2002 but only 35% of those costs in FY 2014.

### Illinois Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

During the Great Recession, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program was very effective in responding to growing need among families with children.



**NOTE** Federal fiscal year.

**SOURCE** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

# MAJOR ECONOMIC SECURITY PROGRAMS FOR ILLINOIS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

## Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

**POLICY DESIGN** federal and state  
**FUNDING** federal and state  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** state  
**ELIGIBILITY LIMIT** 147% of FPL for Medicaid, 318% of FPL for CHIP (as of 2014)\*  
**BENEFICIARIES** 1.6 million children (June 2013)\*  
**TOTAL COST (ESTIMATE FOR CHILDREN ONLY)** \$3 billion (SFY 2013)\*

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

**POLICY DESIGN** federal  
**FUNDING** primarily federal  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** state  
**ELIGIBILITY LIMIT** 130% of FPL  
**BENEFICIARIES** 890,000 children, 1,115,000 adults (monthly average, FFY 2013)\*  
**AVERAGE BENEFIT** \$138 per person per month (FFY 2013)\*  
**MAXIMUM BENEFIT** \$511 per month for 3-person household, \$649 per month for 4-person household (FFY 2015)  
**TOTAL COST (ALL RECIPIENTS)** \$3.4 billion (FFY 2013)\*

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

**POLICY DESIGN** federal and state  
**FUNDING** federal and state  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** state  
**BENEFICIARIES** 38,150 children, 20,900 families (monthly average, FFY 2013)\*  
**MAXIMUM BENEFIT** \$432 per month for single-parent with 2 children\*  
**TOTAL COST** \$81 million (FFY 2013)\*

## Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

**POLICY DESIGN** federal and state  
**FUNDING** federal and state  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** state  
**ELIGIBILITY LIMIT** 185% of FPL\*  
**BENEFICIARIES** 163,250 children (monthly average, SFY 2013)\*  
**TOTAL COST** \$951 million (SFY 2013)\*

## Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

**POLICY DESIGN** federal  
**FUNDING** federal  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** federal  
**ELIGIBILITY PHASE-OUT** \$23,300–\$49,500 for married couple with two children; \$17,850–\$43,750 for single parent with two children (tax year 2014)  
**BENEFICIARIES** 1,048,420 households (tax year 2012)\*  
**AVERAGE BENEFIT** \$2,338 (tax year 2012)\*  
**MAXIMUM BENEFIT** \$3,305 with 1 child, \$5,460 with 2 children, \$6,143 with 3 or more children (tax year 2014)  
**TOTAL COST** \$2.45 billion (tax year 2012)\*

## Federal Child Tax Credit

**POLICY DESIGN** federal  
**FUNDING** federal  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** federal  
**ELIGIBILITY PHASE-OUT** \$110,000–\$150,000 for married couple with 2 children, \$75,000–\$115,000 for single parent with 2 children  
**BENEFICIARIES** 940,000 families (tax year 2012)\*  
**AVERAGE BENEFIT PER FAMILY** \$1,222 (tax year 2012)\*  
**MAXIMUM BENEFIT PER CHILD** \$1,000  
**TOTAL COST** \$1.1 billion (tax year 2012)\*

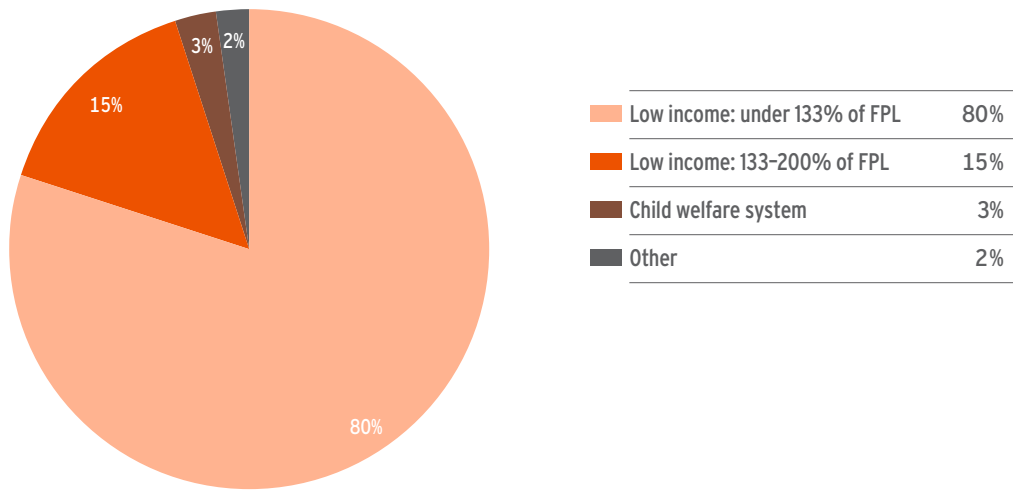
## State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

**POLICY DESIGN** based on federal  
**FUNDING** state  
**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION** state  
**ELIGIBILITY PHASE-OUT** same as federal  
**BENEFICIARIES** 937,400 households (tax year 2012)  
**MAXIMUM BENEFIT** 10% of federal EITC  
**TOTAL COST** \$164 million (tax year 2012)\*

**FPL** federal poverty level  
**FFY** federal fiscal year  
**SFY** state fiscal year

\* In Illinois

### Children's Medical Assistance Enrollment by Eligibility Group, 2013



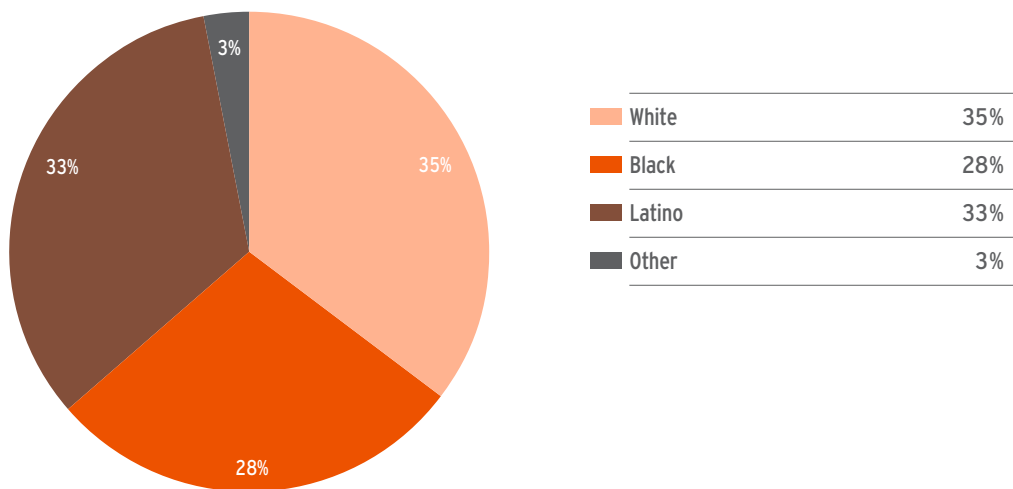
FPL federal poverty level

**NOTE** Medical assistance programs include Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and All Kids expansion.

**SOURCE** Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

As a result of the expansion of eligibility through Medicaid and related programs, only about 3% of Illinois children lack health insurance, one of the lowest uninsured rates of any state.

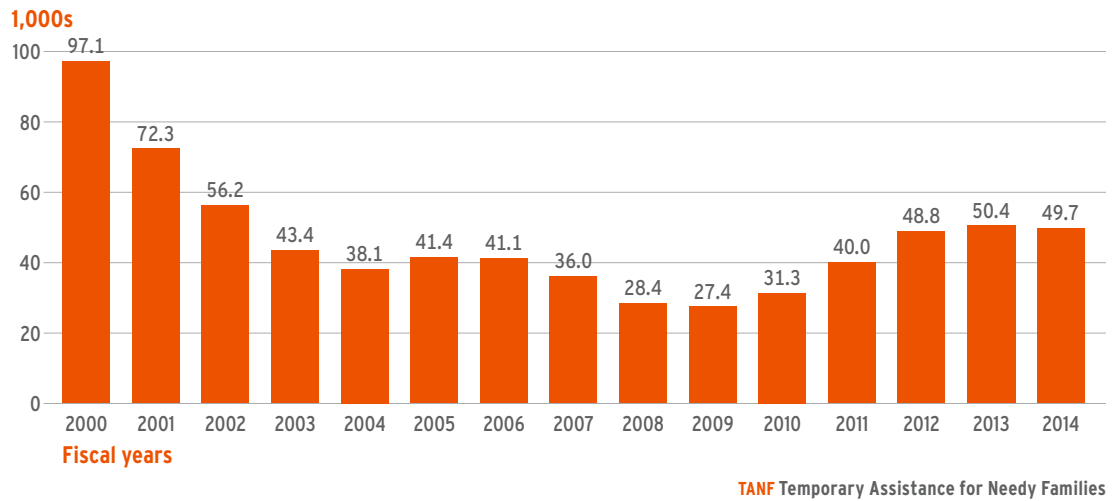
### Children's Medical Assistance Enrollment by Race-Ethnicity, 2013



**NOTE** Medical assistance programs include Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and All Kids expansion.

**SOURCE** Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

### Average Monthly Number of TANF Families



SOURCE Illinois Department of Human Services.

In Illinois, the maximum TANF benefit level for a single parent with two children is currently \$432 per month (\$5,184 per year), which is only about 25% of the federal poverty level.

### Child Care Assistance Program, Fiscal Year 2013

#### Children

Average monthly number served	163,250
Under age 3	27%
Ages 3–5	33%
Ages 6 and older	40%
Average monthly cost per child	\$413

#### Families

Average monthly number served	87,700
Single-parent households	95%
Working families	89%

#### Co-pay amounts per month

\$0	1%
\$1 to \$25	23%
\$26 to \$50	18%
\$51 to \$100	24%
\$101 to \$200	24%
Greater than \$200	11%

SOURCES Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois Office of the Comptroller.

The Child Care Assistance Program was underfunded by about \$300 million in the FY 2015 state budget.



### SNAP Participants in Illinois, Federal Fiscal Year 2013

	1,000s	Percent
<b>Age of recipients</b>		
Under age 18	890	44.4
Ages 18–59	927	46.2
Age 60 and over	188	9.4
<b>Households with:</b>		
Children*	432	43.1
Single adults with children*	265	36.5
Disabled non-elderly individuals*	189	18.8
Elderly individuals*	172	17.2
<b>Poverty status of households</b>		
50% FPL or less	459	45.8
51%–100% FPL	417	41.6
Above 100% FPL	126	12.6

SNAP Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program  
FPL federal poverty level

\* Categories not mutually exclusive.

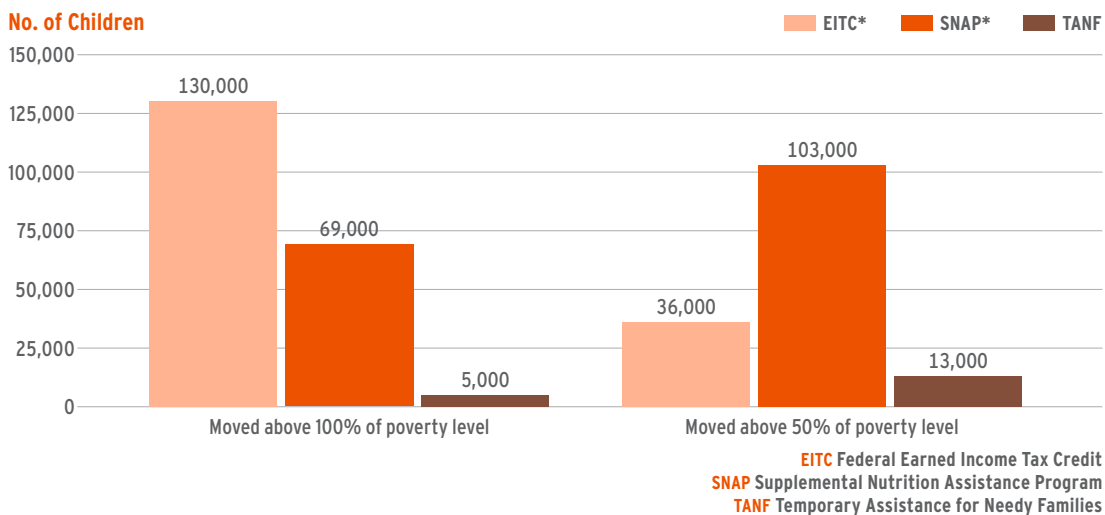
SOURCE U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

### Federal EITC Recipients in Illinois, Tax Year 2012

	Households		
	1,000s	Percent	Average credit
<b>Adjusted gross income</b>			
Under \$10,000	293	28.0	\$1,230
\$10,000 to \$24,999	486	46.3	3,294
\$25,000 and over	269	25.7	1,823
Total	1,048	100.0	2,338
EITC Earned Income Tax Credit			

SOURCE U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

### Anti-Poverty Effects of Selected Programs in Illinois, 2013



\* Not included in calculation of official federal poverty rate.

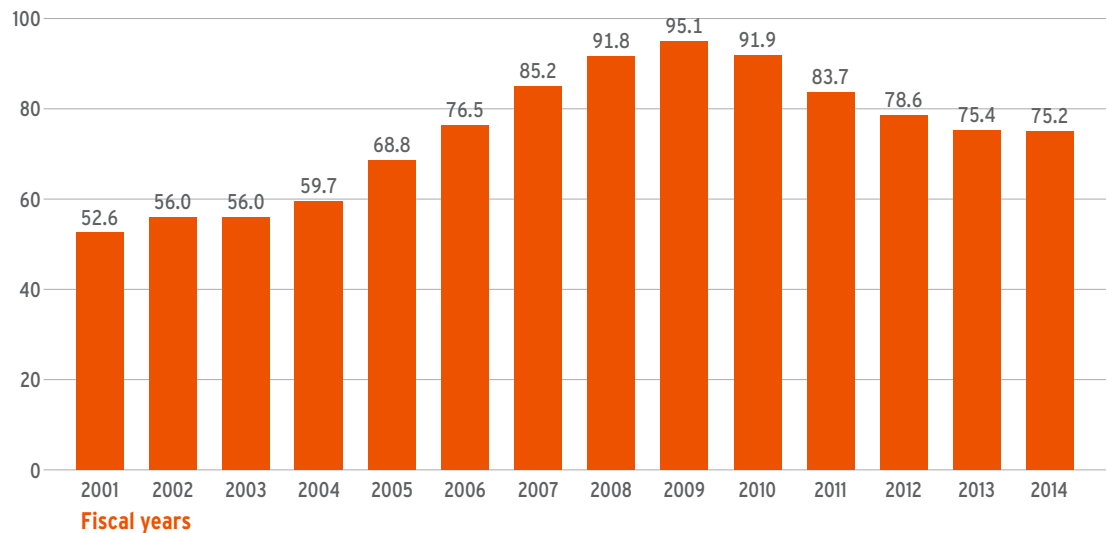
SOURCE Estimates based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, CPS Table Creator (2-year averages for 2012–2013).

Estimates of the anti-poverty effects of EITC, SNAP, and TANF in Illinois are derived from calculations using an approximation of the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure.

Extensive research shows that high-quality preschool programs can produce significant gains in school readiness and academic success, as well as improved economic outcomes in adulthood.

### Children Served in State-Funded Preschool

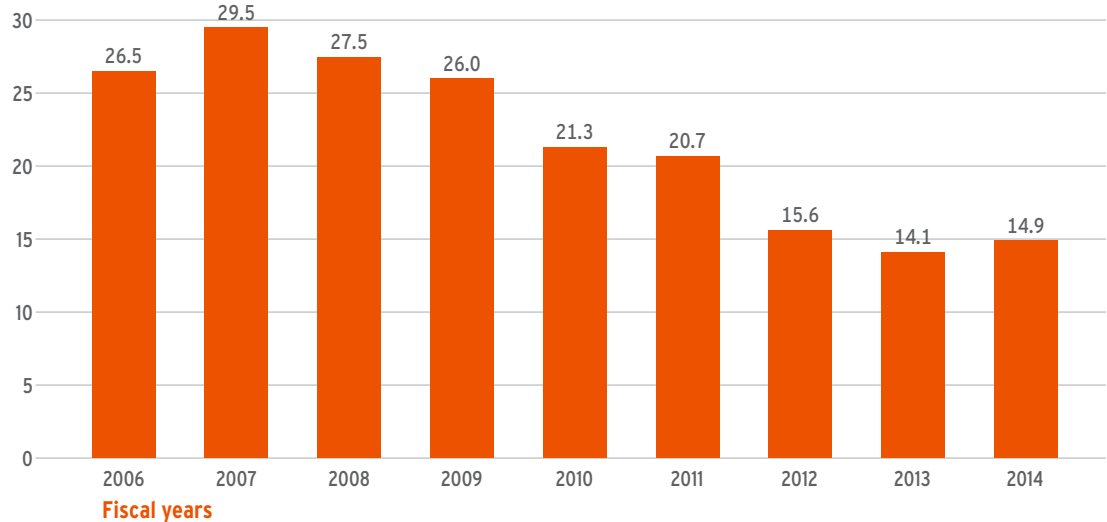
1,000s



SOURCE Illinois State Board of Education.

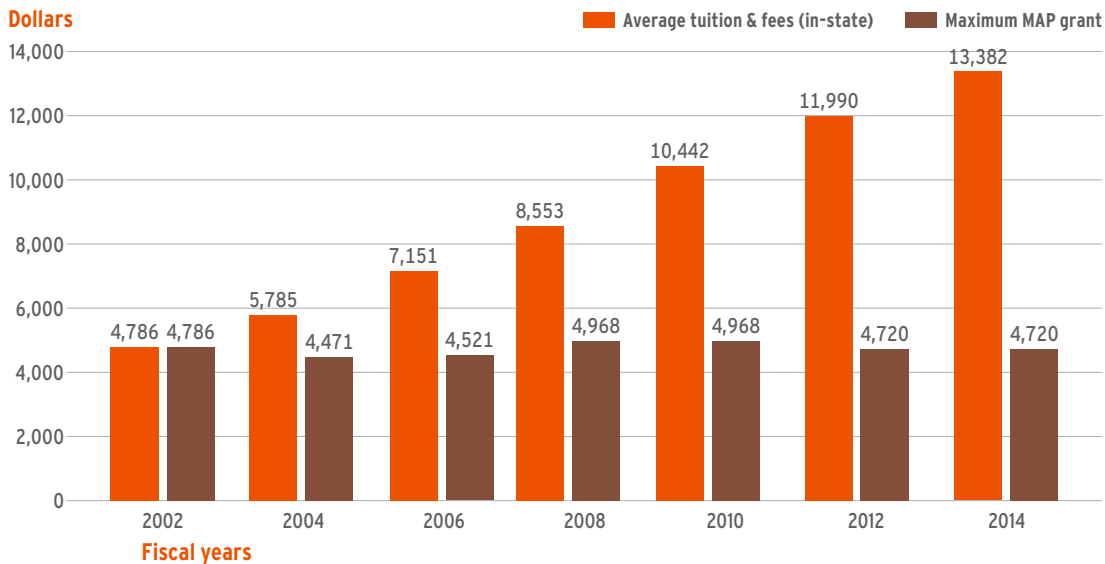
### Participation in Teen REACH Afterschool Programs

1,000s



SOURCE Illinois Department of Human Services.

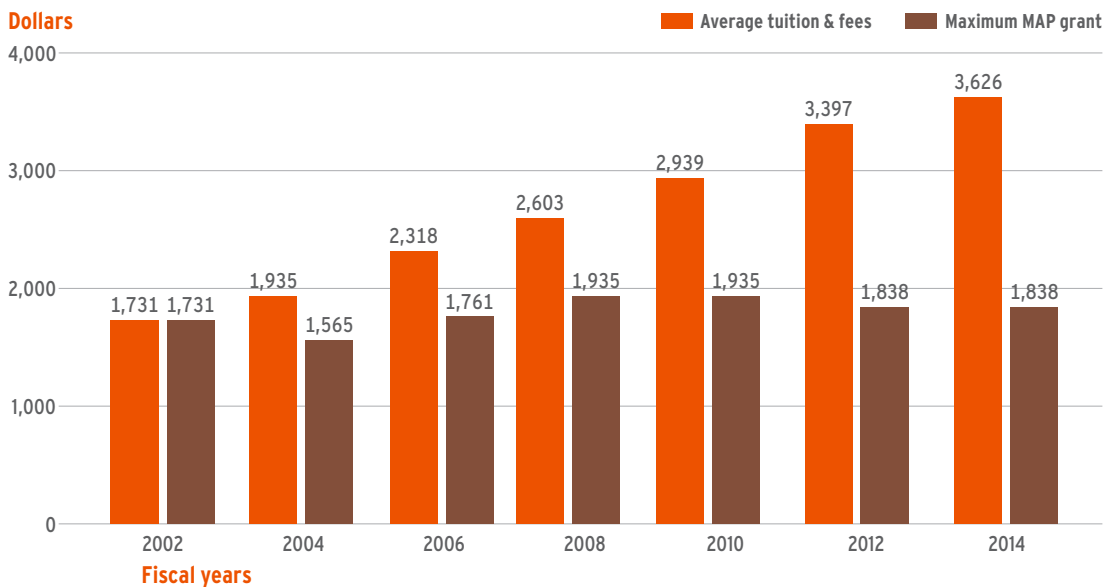
### Monetary Award Program (MAP): Students at Public Universities



SOURCE Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

The Monetary Award Program (MAP) provides grants to low-income students to help pay for tuition and fees at colleges and universities in Illinois. In FY 2014, MAP grants were awarded to about 45,000 students in public universities, 37,000 in private institutions, and 47,000 in community colleges.

### Monetary Award Program (MAP): Students at Community Colleges

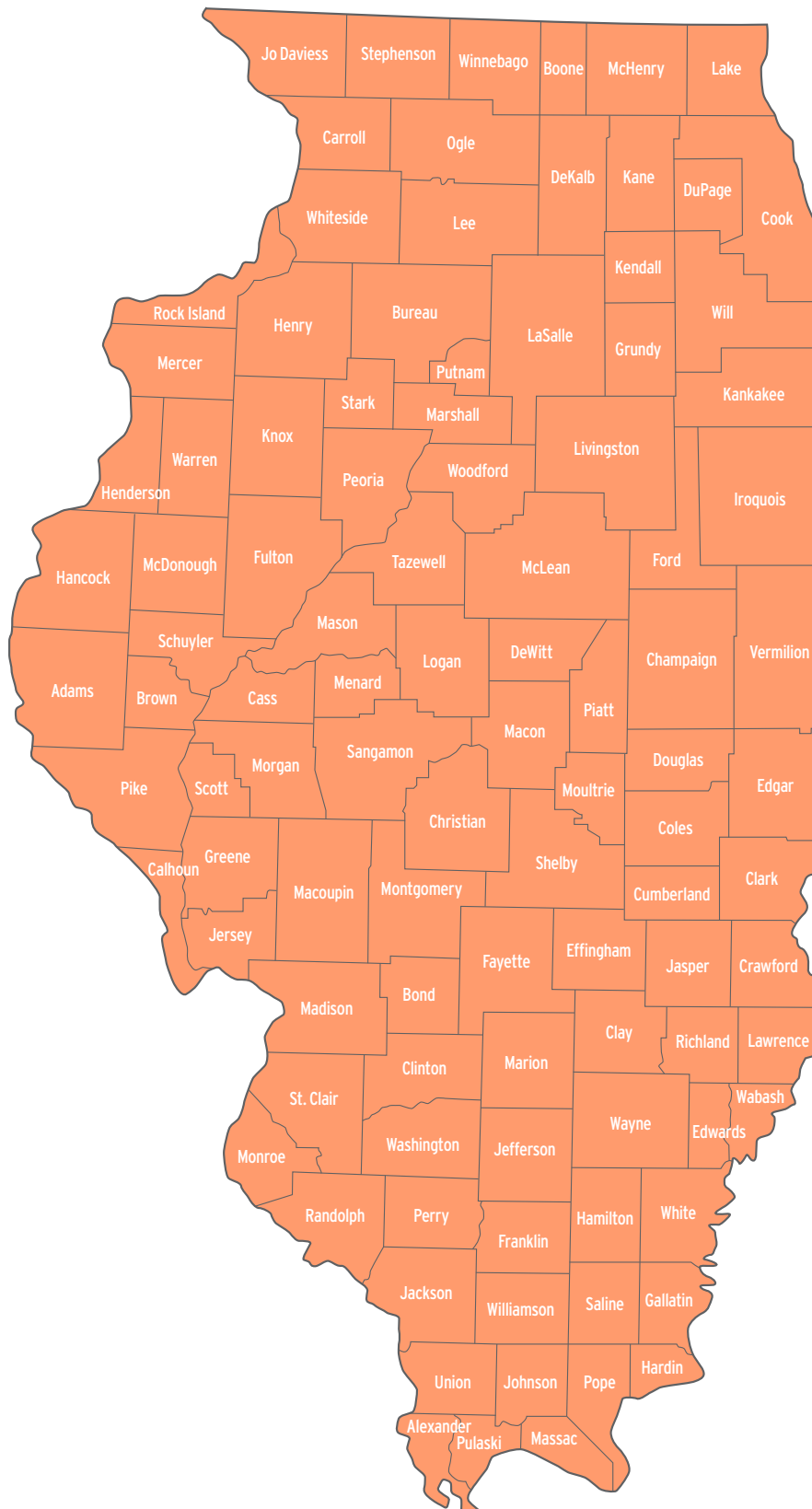


SOURCE Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

# County Data



## Illinois Counties



## Percentage Distribution of Child Population by Race-Ethnicity, 40 Largest Counties

	2000				2010			
	White	Black	Latino	Other	White	Black	Latino	Other
Adams	91.9	4.3	1.3	2.5	88.3	4.9	2.0	4.8
Boone	79.4	1.2	17.1	2.3	63.7	2.7	29.8	3.8
Champaign	71.8	17.3	3.0	7.9	60.6	20.0	7.7	11.7
Clinton	95.2	1.4	1.8	1.6	91.7	1.2	4.0	3.1
Coles	93.0	2.3	1.9	2.8	89.3	3.3	3.2	4.2
Cook	34.5	32.2	27.4	5.9	30.2	28.5	34.3	7.0
Chicago	16.9	43.7	34.8	4.6	16.4	37.8	40.9	4.9
Suburbs	56.4	18.2	18.4	7.0	44.2	19.2	27.5	9.1
DeKalb	83.4	4.0	9.1	3.5	71.3	7.5	16.8	4.4
DuPage	74.2	3.7	11.8	10.3	60.9	6.0	19.5	13.6
Franklin	97.6	0.1	1.1	1.2	94.7	0.6	2.4	2.3
Fulton	96.6	0.6	1.4	1.4	94.6	0.8	2.1	2.5
Grundy	91.8	0.2	6.5	1.5	83.0	1.8	12.7	2.5
Henry	91.5	1.7	5.0	1.8	85.7	2.5	8.7	3.1
Jackson	71.5	19.0	3.3	6.2	66.2	18.7	6.5	8.6
Jefferson	86.6	8.8	1.7	2.9	82.3	10.0	2.9	4.8
Kane	58.8	7.4	30.3	3.5	46.6	6.8	41.1	5.5
Kankakee	68.9	21.4	6.9	2.8	61.7	19.3	14.5	4.5
Kendall	85.3	1.5	10.4	2.8	66.5	6.7	21.0	5.8
Knox	84.4	7.0	5.0	3.6	77.6	8.3	8.0	6.1
Lake	67.8	8.1	18.2	5.9	54.9	7.9	27.8	9.4
LaSalle	88.4	1.3	8.0	2.3	81.0	1.8	14.0	3.2
Livingston	93.3	1.5	3.5	1.7	89.1	1.6	6.3	3.0
Macon	73.8	20.5	1.5	4.2	66.6	22.4	3.2	7.8
Macoupin	96.5	1.2	1.0	1.3	95.2	1.1	1.5	2.2
Madison	84.5	10.4	2.2	2.9	79.7	10.6	4.5	5.2
Marion	89.8	5.4	1.5	3.3	87.2	5.7	2.4	4.7
McHenry	87.2	0.7	9.3	2.8	76.6	1.4	16.7	5.3
McLean	82.8	8.7	3.7	4.8	72.2	10.3	7.2	10.3
Ogle	88.7	0.6	8.7	2.0	80.5	1.6	14.9	3.0
Peoria	66.2	25.4	3.2	5.2	58.4	25.8	6.0	9.8
Rock Island	71.3	10.7	13.8	4.2	60.5	12.8	20.0	6.7
St. Clair	57.3	36.8	2.9	3.0	52.3	37.4	4.8	5.5
Sangamon	79.9	14.5	1.6	4.0	72.6	17.5	2.7	7.2
Stephenson	81.8	11.3	2.5	4.4	73.8	12.9	5.7	7.6
Tazewell	96.1	0.5	1.5	1.9	92.3	1.1	2.9	3.7
Vermilion	78.7	13.6	4.7	3.0	70.0	18.0	7.3	4.7
Whiteside	83.3	1.5	13.1	2.1	76.0	2.1	18.7	3.2
Will	72.7	11.8	11.1	4.4	58.9	12.2	21.4	7.5
Williamson	92.2	3.2	2.0	2.6	86.8	4.8	3.2	5.2
Winnebago	69.8	14.9	10.4	4.9	58.1	16.5	18.1	7.3
Woodford	97.1	0.4	0.9	1.6	93.6	0.9	2.6	2.9
Statewide	59.2	18.7	17.0	5.1	53.0	17.0	23.1	6.9

SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and Census 2010.



## Child Poverty Population, 40 Largest Counties

	Number of children in poverty			Percent change
	1999	2006	2012	1999-2012
Adams	2,053	2,452	3,158	53.8
Boone	1,117	2,037	1,938	73.5
Champaign	4,515	6,245	8,886	96.8
Clinton	719	949	864	20.2
Coles	1,232	1,578	2,559	107.7
Cook	264,187	284,925	310,593	17.6
Chicago	211,780	206,659	209,574	-1.0
Suburbs	52,407	78,266	101,019	92.8
DeKalb	1,508	2,280	5,371	256.2
DuPage	9,818	13,301	23,279	137.1
Franklin	2,158	2,292	2,195	1.7
Fulton	1,126	1,541	1,052	-6.6
Grundy	526	630	1,544	193.5
Henry	1,419	2,061	1,712	20.6
Jackson	2,585	2,975	3,464	34.0
Jefferson	1,407	1,925	1,904	35.3
Kane	10,912	17,042	26,501	142.9
Kankakee	4,395	5,004	6,939	57.9
Kendall	645	1,555	2,458	281.1
Knox	2,089	2,715	3,336	59.7
Lake	13,484	15,834	27,087	100.9
LaSalle	3,717	4,518	4,887	31.5
Livingston	993	1,118	1,479	48.9
Macon	5,336	6,729	6,847	28.3
Macoupin	1,594	1,727	2,038	27.9
Madison	8,318	9,043	10,765	29.4
Marion	1,796	2,208	2,563	42.7
McHenry	3,239	5,761	9,003	178.0
McLean	2,601	4,964	5,270	102.6
Ogle	1,192	896	1,527	28.1
Peoria	9,441	8,531	12,664	34.1
Rock Island	5,623	7,384	7,752	37.9
St. Clair	15,253	14,836	19,791	29.8
Sangamon	6,130	8,351	11,457	86.9
Stephenson	1,470	2,175	3,002	104.2
Tazewell	2,418	4,223	3,905	61.5
Vermilion	3,972	6,002	5,724	44.1
Whiteside	1,751	2,616	2,314	32.2
Will	8,770	12,606	21,253	142.3
Williamson	2,755	2,838	3,058	11.0
Winnebago	9,537	15,275	18,786	97.0
Woodford	540	665	1,225	126.9
Statewide	456,901	529,045	634,332	38.8

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007 and 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Child Poverty Rates, 40 Largest Counties

	Percentage of children in poverty			Change
	1999	2006	2012	1999-2012
Adams	12.3	16.1	21.3	9.0
Boone	9.1	14.5	13.1	4.0
Champaign	12.2	16.7	23.4	11.2
Clinton	8.2	11.9	10.4	2.2
Coles	11.9	17.4	26.8	14.9
Cook	19.3	21.7	26.0	6.7
Chicago	28.5	31.0	35.0	6.5
Suburbs	8.3	12.1	17.0	8.7
DeKalb	7.4	10.4	23.7	16.3
DuPage	4.1	5.7	10.5	6.4
Franklin	24.4	26.5	25.0	0.6
Fulton	13.7	20.5	14.2	0.6
Grundy	5.3	5.6	11.6	6.3
Henry	11.1	18.7	15.1	4.0
Jackson	23.6	30.4	33.7	10.2
Jefferson	14.9	22.3	23.0	8.1
Kane	9.1	11.8	18.4	9.3
Kankakee	15.9	18.4	25.5	9.6
Kendall	4.0	6.2	6.9	2.9
Knox	17.5	25.4	32.5	15.1
Lake	7.2	8.1	14.8	7.6
LaSalle	13.5	17.1	19.9	6.4
Livingston	10.2	13.6	18.1	7.9
Macon	19.2	27.1	28.4	9.1
Macoupin	13.4	16.1	20.1	6.7
Madison	13.1	14.7	18.4	5.3
Marion	17.3	24.2	30.5	13.2
McHenry	4.2	6.8	11.3	7.2
McLean	7.5	13.6	13.9	6.4
Ogle	8.7	6.8	12.5	3.7
Peoria	21.0	19.2	28.9	7.9
Rock Island	16.2	22.2	23.9	7.7
St. Clair	21.9	22.1	30.3	8.4
Sangamon	13.2	18.4	25.2	12.0
Stephenson	12.1	20.1	29.1	17.0
Tazewell	7.9	14.5	12.5	4.6
Vermilion	19.3	31.1	30.0	10.7
Whiteside	11.7	19.3	17.8	6.1
Will	5.9	6.8	11.3	5.4
Williamson	20.0	20.5	21.3	1.3
Winnebago	13.3	20.8	27.1	13.8
Woodford	5.8	7.4	12.8	7.1
Statewide	14.3	16.7	21.0	6.7

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007 and 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Percentage of Children in Deep Poverty (Below 50% of Poverty Level), 40 Largest Counties

	1999	2006	2012
Adams	4.7	5.0	9.0
Boone	3.3	5.7	7.8
Champaign	5.5	7.6	10.6
Clinton	3.3	3.7	1.5
Coles	4.8	7.3	8.0
Cook	10.0	9.9	11.6
Chicago	15.2	14.5	16.2
Suburbs	3.9	5.2	6.8
DeKalb	3.1	4.9	11.1
DuPage	2.0	2.1	4.1
Franklin	10.5	13.4	12.5
Fulton	4.7	10.3	6.3
Grundy	2.3	3.3	5.5
Henry	5.9	7.3	4.7
Jackson	12.1	19.1	16.6
Jefferson	5.7	5.8	14.5
Kane	3.5	4.7	6.3
Kankakee	7.1	8.7	14.3
Kendall	1.2	2.2	2.9
Knox	7.8	13.4	14.1
Lake	2.8	3.6	6.2
LaSalle	5.7	6.9	8.5
Livingston	3.4	7.6	7.2
Macon	9.7	11.9	13.8
Macoupin	4.8	8.4	6.4
Madison	6.5	6.2	9.2
Marion	6.3	10.8	11.7
McHenry	1.7	3.3	2.8
McLean	3.4	5.5	5.8
Ogle	3.9	2.7	5.9
Peoria	10.0	10.8	13.7
Rock Island	7.3	10.5	10.8
St. Clair	10.6	11.4	16.6
Sangamon	6.9	8.7	12.5
Stephenson	5.4	9.2	11.1
Tazewell	2.8	7.5	5.5
Vermilion	9.2	17.1	14.2
Whiteside	4.1	7.8	7.2
Will	2.8	3.2	4.6
Williamson	7.3	6.8	10.3
Winnebago	6.8	10.0	14.7
Woodford	2.2	3.7	5.1
Statewide	6.9	7.6	9.3

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey, 2005-2007, 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

### Percentage Distribution of Child Poverty Population by Race-Ethnicity, 40 Largest Counties, 2011

	White	Black	Latino	Other
Adams	75.2	15.8	0.8	8.2
Boone	62.6	4.3	32.4	0.6
Champaign	31.9	46.5	11.3	10.4
Clinton	83.8	*	2.5	13.6
Coles	86.4	1.5	4.4	7.7
Cook	9.7	45.9	39.9	4.5
Chicago	4.5	52.9	39.3	3.4
Suburbs	20.8	31.1	41.4	6.8
DeKalb	36.0	20.8	35.3	7.8
DuPage	27.2	17.9	43.8	11.1
Franklin	88.0	*	3.6	8.4
Fulton	91.5	0.9	3.7	3.9
Grundy	73.4	3.4	22.3	0.9
Henry	66.1	9.9	14.9	9.1
Jackson	45.0	34.8	10.8	9.4
Jefferson	67.3	16.1	1.8	14.8
Kane	13.7	17.9	66.2	2.2
Kankakee	26.1	39.9	27.6	6.4
Kendall	33.0	12.4	48.5	6.1
Knox	53.4	29.8	10.9	5.9
Lake	24.7	24.5	47.5	3.3
LaSalle	69.7	7.5	16.7	6.2
Livingston	83.9	*	12.1	4.0
Macon	41.1	40.7	6.9	11.3
Macoupin	91.5	*	1.8	6.7
Madison	63.7	22.5	6.1	7.7
Marion	82.1	4.4	4.1	9.4
McHenry	54.1	1.6	41.8	2.5
McLean	52.7	33.4	6.6	7.3
Ogle	61.1	1.6	34.2	3.1
Peoria	30.0	50.8	8.7	10.5
Rock Island	43.4	29.6	22.9	4.2
St. Clair	22.2	66.7	6.0	5.1
Sangamon	46.9	38.4	4.1	10.6
Stephenson	52.1	23.1	6.5	18.4
Tazewell	84.0	0.2	6.1	9.7
Vermilion	45.1	42.5	8.0	4.4
Whiteside	66.4	4.5	23.2	5.9
Will	26.8	24.3	36.7	12.1
Williamson	73.1	10.0	4.4	12.5
Winnebago	27.8	34.4	31.7	6.1
Woodford	90.5	3.4	2.3	3.7
Rest of state	82.9	5.4	6.1	5.5
Statewide	27.8	34.7	31.7	5.7

\*Less than 0.05.

**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009–2013 (5-year pooled data).

## Median Family Income, 40 Largest Counties

	1999	2012	Percent change (adjusted for inflation)
Adams	\$44,133	\$59,187	-4.1
Boone	59,305	66,256	-20.1
Champaign	52,591	68,167	-7.3
Clinton	52,580	79,766	8.5
Coles	45,708	54,768	-14.3
Cook	53,784	64,754	-13.9
Chicago	42,724	52,299	-12.5
DeKalb	58,194	67,720	-16.8
DuPage	79,314	93,834	-15.4
Franklin	36,294	50,579	-0.3
Fulton	41,193	57,918	0.6
Grundy	60,862	78,084	-8.2
Henry	48,413	62,493	-7.7
Jackson	40,950	52,468	-8.4
Jefferson	41,141	54,732	-4.9
Kane	66,558	78,996	-15.1
Kankakee	48,975	59,623	-12.9
Kendall	69,383	90,952	-6.3
Knox	44,010	51,107	-17.0
Lake	76,424	90,331	-15.5
LaSalle	49,533	61,134	-11.7
Livingston	47,958	65,309	-2.6
Macon	47,493	57,722	-13.1
Macoupin	43,021	59,192	-1.6
Madison	50,862	65,892	-7.4
Marion	41,427	52,927	-8.6
McHenry	71,553	87,211	-12.8
McLean	61,073	82,705	-3.2
Ogle	53,028	68,436	-7.7
Peoria	50,592	64,524	-8.8
Rock Island	47,956	60,395	-9.9
St. Clair	47,409	61,655	-7.0
Sangamon	53,900	69,958	-7.2
Stephenson	48,510	53,743	-20.8
Tazewell	53,412	69,168	-7.4
Vermilion	41,553	54,199	-6.7
Whiteside	46,653	58,753	-9.9
Will	69,608	85,134	-12.5
Williamson	40,692	53,869	-5.3
Winnebago	52,456	56,758	-22.6
Woodford	58,305	77,620	-4.8
Statewide	55,545	69,142	-11.0

**SOURCES** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Unemployment Rates, 40 Largest Counties

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Adams	3.6	4.1	4.9	7.2	7.5	6.6	6.2	6.5	5.3
Boone	5.9	6.9	9.5	15.1	15.9	13.4	11.8	11.5	9.5
Champaign	3.9	4.4	5.7	8.2	9.0	8.4	8.0	8.2	6.8
Clinton	4.7	5.0	6.3	8.3	8.2	7.9	7.6	7.3	5.9
Coles	4.4	4.6	6.3	8.9	9.8	9.3	8.7	8.8	7.0
Cook	4.8	5.2	6.4	10.4	10.8	10.3	9.3	9.6	7.3
Chicago	5.3	5.7	6.9	10.9	11.7	11.3	10.2	10.5	8.0
Suburbs	4.3	4.7	5.9	9.9	10.0	9.3	8.4	8.8	6.6
DeKalb	3.9	4.6	5.9	9.8	9.8	9.2	8.3	8.3	6.3
DuPage	3.4	3.8	5.0	8.4	8.5	8.0	7.3	7.5	5.6
Franklin	7.0	8.3	9.5	12.8	13.0	11.6	11.2	12.7	10.3
Fulton	5.4	5.6	6.7	11.2	11.7	10.2	9.8	10.8	8.9
Grundy	5.1	5.6	7.2	12.0	12.3	11.8	10.3	10.9	7.9
Henry	4.4	5.1	6.2	9.0	9.1	7.6	7.5	7.8	6.8
Jackson	4.2	4.9	5.8	7.2	8.0	7.7	7.6	7.9	6.7
Jefferson	4.9	5.2	6.4	9.4	9.7	8.5	8.5	8.9	7.2
Kane	4.3	4.8	6.2	10.2	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.9	6.7
Kankakee	5.9	6.6	8.6	12.0	13.3	12.0	11.2	11.3	9.1
Kendall	3.8	4.3	5.7	9.9	9.4	8.6	7.9	8.3	6.1
Knox	5.6	5.3	6.6	9.4	9.6	8.7	8.4	8.9	7.4
Lake	4.5	5.1	6.6	9.7	10.6	9.4	8.8	8.7	7.2
LaSalle	5.6	6.3	7.9	12.0	13.1	11.4	11.0	11.4	9.3
Livingston	4.4	4.7	6.0	10.1	10.6	8.8	8.2	8.6	7.1
Macon	5.6	5.9	7.0	11.3	11.9	10.5	10.7	12.2	9.5
Macoupin	5.5	6.3	7.6	10.4	10.6	9.9	9.6	8.9	7.2
Madison	5.2	5.7	6.6	10.0	9.9	9.0	8.9	8.4	6.7
Marion	6.1	6.7	8.5	11.7	12.2	11.0	11.0	11.5	9.3
McHenry	3.8	4.3	5.8	9.6	10.0	9.4	8.5	8.3	6.2
McLean	3.6	4.0	5.0	7.1	7.8	7.2	7.1	7.3	6.3
Ogle	5.3	5.9	7.9	12.2	13.5	12.1	10.9	10.7	8.7
Peoria	4.5	4.9	5.9	10.8	11.0	9.4	8.6	9.9	8.3
Rock Island	4.6	4.8	5.6	9.0	9.6	8.2	7.8	7.9	7.1
St. Clair	6.1	6.4	7.7	10.7	10.9	10.2	9.8	9.5	7.7
Sangamon	4.4	4.7	5.7	7.3	8.1	7.6	7.6	7.8	6.5
Stephenson	5.0	5.4	6.9	11.2	11.8	10.2	9.5	10.1	8.3
Tazewell	4.0	4.5	5.4	10.3	10.2	8.3	7.7	9.0	7.3
Vermilion	6.0	6.5	7.9	11.3	12.4	10.5	10.0	11.6	9.6
Whiteside	5.5	5.6	6.9	10.2	10.9	9.8	9.3	9.5	7.7
Will	4.2	4.7	6.1	10.1	10.7	10.1	9.1	9.4	7.2
Williamson	5.0	6.8	7.1	9.1	9.5	8.7	8.4	8.9	7.4
Winnebago	5.6	6.3	8.6	14.8	15.3	12.7	11.6	11.6	9.5
Woodford	3.3	3.6	4.4	8.1	8.3	6.9	6.6	7.6	6.3
Statewide	4.6	5.1	6.4	10.0	10.5	9.7	8.9	9.2	7.3

SOURCE Illinois Department of Employment Security.



## Employment in 40 Largest Counties

	Number of residents employed					Percent change				
	2000	2003	2007	2010	2013	2000-2003	2003-2007	2007-2010	2010-2013	2000-2013
Adams	34,561	33,467	37,672	35,082	33,841	-3.2	12.6	-6.9	-3.5	-2.1
Boone	20,965	20,912	24,741	22,346	22,315	-0.3	18.3	-9.7	-0.1	6.4
Champaign	95,579	94,590	99,635	95,134	91,052	-1.0	5.3	-4.5	-4.3	-4.7
Clinton	17,620	17,106	18,244	17,734	17,589	-2.9	6.7	-2.8	-0.8	-0.2
Coles	26,966	25,289	26,463	24,545	23,659	-6.2	4.6	-7.2	-3.6	-12.3
Cook	2,596,408	2,417,183	2,490,758	2,309,775	2,364,985	-6.9	3.0	-7.3	2.4	-8.9
Chicago	1,307,918	1,215,104	1,249,238	1,117,195	1,143,944	-7.1	2.8	-10.6	2.4	-12.5
Suburbs	1,288,490	1,202,079	1,241,520	1,192,580	1,221,041	-6.7	3.3	-3.9	2.4	-5.2
DeKalb	49,401	48,481	56,015	53,579	54,238	-1.9	15.5	-4.3	1.2	9.8
DuPage	511,994	488,557	512,122	476,800	490,623	-4.6	4.8	-6.9	2.9	-4.2
Franklin	16,337	15,628	16,664	15,704	14,734	-4.3	6.6	-5.8	-6.2	-9.8
Fulton	16,667	15,851	16,800	16,428	15,404	-4.9	6.0	-2.2	-6.2	-7.6
Grundy	19,985	19,656	24,405	24,452	24,969	-1.6	24.2	0.2	2.1	24.9
Henry	25,974	24,679	26,215	24,828	24,216	-5.0	6.2	-5.3	-2.5	-6.8
Jackson	28,974	29,047	31,302	30,184	27,905	0.3	7.8	-3.6	-7.6	-3.7
Jefferson	18,072	18,017	20,096	18,349	18,165	-0.3	11.5	-8.7	-1.0	0.5
Kane	212,203	223,291	254,543	246,986	254,634	5.2	14.0	-3.0	3.1	20.0
Kankakee	49,984	47,621	51,821	49,210	48,809	-4.7	8.8	-5.0	-0.8	-2.4
Kendall	31,290	35,578	53,578	59,905	62,695	13.7	50.6	11.8	4.7	100.4
Knox	26,621	23,941	24,090	23,579	22,250	-10.1	0.6	-2.1	-5.6	-16.4
Lake	325,926	322,498	350,795	323,993	327,382	-1.1	8.8	-7.6	1.0	0.4
LaSalle	53,331	50,047	55,100	52,327	50,323	-6.2	10.1	-5.0	-3.8	-5.6
Livingston	18,739	17,572	18,603	17,127	16,301	-6.2	5.9	-7.9	-4.8	-13.0
Macon	52,936	47,696	50,986	48,259	46,063	-9.9	6.9	-5.3	-4.6	-13.0
Macoupin	23,270	22,311	23,105	21,457	20,871	-4.1	3.6	-7.1	-2.7	-10.3
Madison	126,824	123,420	132,025	124,709	122,036	-2.7	7.0	-5.5	-2.1	-3.8
Marion	19,531	16,678	17,516	16,107	15,163	-14.6	5.0	-8.0	-5.9	-22.4
McHenry	145,929	150,600	171,972	158,563	160,894	3.2	14.2	-7.8	1.5	10.3
McLean	82,590	82,146	86,225	85,234	81,621	-0.5	5.0	-1.1	-4.2	-1.2
Ogle	25,819	23,832	26,191	23,811	22,643	-7.7	9.9	-9.1	-4.9	-12.3
Peoria	87,165	82,333	92,303	86,562	84,779	-5.5	12.1	-6.2	-2.1	-2.7
Rock Island	74,057	70,152	75,927	70,831	69,500	-5.3	8.2	-6.7	-1.9	-6.2
St. Clair	113,485	109,685	116,788	113,186	110,845	-3.3	6.5	-3.1	-2.1	-2.3
Sangamon	101,455	96,166	102,091	100,774	96,769	-5.2	6.2	-1.3	-4.0	-4.6
Stephenson	24,604	22,983	23,983	21,798	20,423	-6.6	4.4	-9.1	-6.3	-17.0
Tazewell	64,472	61,177	69,792	66,350	64,988	-5.1	14.1	-4.9	-2.1	0.8
Vermilion	36,573	34,387	35,156	32,577	31,260	-6.0	2.2	-7.3	-4.0	-14.5
Whiteside	29,561	26,898	28,955	26,639	26,322	-9.0	7.6	-8.0	-1.2	-11.0
Will	267,410	288,311	345,864	328,242	336,174	7.8	20.0	-5.1	2.4	25.7
Williamson	28,091	28,927	33,649	32,107	30,609	3.0	16.3	-4.6	-4.7	9.0
Winnebago	139,718	128,380	138,800	122,450	121,456	-8.1	8.1	-11.8	-0.8	-13.1
Woodford	18,119	17,653	20,566	19,248	18,924	-2.6	16.5	-6.4	-1.7	4.4
Statewide	6,176,840	5,916,835	6,322,042	5,924,841	5,954,318	-4.2	6.8	-6.3	0.5	-3.6

SOURCE Illinois Department of Employment Security.

## Child Abuse and Neglect, 40 Largest Counties (fiscal years)

	Substantiated cases (unique count)									Percent change	Rate per 1,000 children 3-year averages		
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2006-2014	2004-2006	2008-2010	2012-2014
Adams	252	292	280	239	316	296	244	240	272	7.9	17.4	16.3	15.6
Boone	99	109	122	88	94	85	69	110	112	13.1	7.0	8.3	8.7
Champaign	606	577	549	536	531	542	580	553	556	-8.3	13.1	12.5	14.2
Clinton	75	60	70	76	69	70	66	43	64	-14.7	8.5	8.2	6.6
Coles	187	155	175	179	212	142	118	204	209	11.8	16.8	15.9	17.0
Cook	7,219	7,332	7,770	7,435	7,344	7,033	7,895	7,938	9,386	30.0	5.3	5.4	6.6
DeKalb	137	131	157	166	161	166	145	177	244	78.1	6.0	7.1	5.7
DuPage	675	633	787	720	713	732	906	984	971	43.9	2.5	3.1	4.3
Franklin	160	147	148	154	167	156	140	168	168	5.0	19.3	17.4	17.3
Fulton	153	120	126	113	105	169	137	139	131	-14.4	14.9	13.7	16.3
Grundy	51	58	50	77	79	75	78	93	102	100.0	4.5	6.9	8.6
Henry	124	150	140	162	214	220	158	180	83	-33.1	11.8	13.5	10.9
Jackson	176	195	195	119	160	178	188	216	260	47.7	13.5	12.1	19.4
Jefferson	232	220	272	269	286	272	257	363	340	46.6	20.6	28.5	34.7
Kane	699	983	1,050	1,110	971	951	982	1,087	1,368	95.7	5.4	8.6	9.7
Kankakee	282	197	221	147	188	170	202	245	277	-1.8	10.8	6.6	8.8
Kendall	77	103	106	134	120	146	120	145	179	132.5	4.0	7.5	8.3
Knox	244	208	187	209	175	159	194	173	190	-22.1	18.4	15.4	15.7
Lake	1,204	1,450	1,567	1,635	1,567	1,357	1,476	1,421	1,542	28.1	6.4	8.4	8.7
LaSalle	448	494	472	455	460	453	389	448	378	-15.6	16.0	16.7	15.3
Livingston	122	134	156	170	166	173	140	146	133	9.0	14.3	16.8	15.2
Macon	403	409	532	516	537	475	531	631	802	99.0	12.3	18.6	24.2
Macoupin	134	153	168	147	189	220	208	200	223	66.4	13.3	14.0	18.5
Madison	597	713	698	659	784	598	536	642	761	27.5	10.4	11.0	10.5
Marion	272	226	219	148	203	183	210	227	227	-16.5	24.9	18.1	22.5
McHenry	620	573	652	518	504	573	502	544	554	-10.6	7.0	7.2	7.9
McLean	516	703	601	496	559	484	497	456	445	-13.8	14.6	14.6	13.4
Ogle	84	157	114	126	91	99	72	104	93	10.7	8.2	8.0	7.0
Peoria	690	695	703	703	691	706	740	853	930	34.8	14.5	15.1	18.4
Rock Island	545	654	613	654	712	570	563	564	643	18.0	16.7	18.4	16.8
St. Clair	548	716	678	612	547	620	535	602	771	40.7	8.4	8.7	9.1
Sangamon	691	768	837	908	701	693	727	757	979	41.7	15.7	17.6	17.9
Stephenson	172	183	143	163	164	138	126	121	168	-2.3	12.1	12.8	12.1
Tazewell	443	384	469	505	457	397	368	282	347	-21.7	12.7	15.4	10.5
Vermilion	298	381	429	471	417	440	409	515	525	76.2	19.4	21.1	23.2
Whiteside	250	217	269	269	249	176	178	171	241	-3.6	14.9	17.3	13.6
Will	584	649	924	910	839	850	866	984	1,027	75.9	3.9	6.0	6.8
Williamson	280	254	256	245	202	276	212	248	287	2.5	19.2	16.7	17.7
Winnebago	1,080	1,208	1,434	1,592	1,344	1,323	1,300	1,316	1,651	52.9	15.4	20.0	20.5
Woodford	58	84	72	78	59	52	55	81	59	1.7	7.4	7.3	6.9
Statewide	24,772	26,399	27,947	27,610	27,032	26,054	26,682	27,888	31,384	26.7	7.8	8.5	9.3

SOURCE Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

## Households with Children Receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits, 40 Largest Counties, 2012

	Households with children	Receiving SNAP benefits	Percent
Adams	7,705	2,023	26.2
Boone	7,236	1,362	18.8
Champaign	19,538	3,878	19.9
Clinton	4,259	467	11.0
Coles	5,317	1,470	27.6
Cook	600,704	157,724	26.3
Chicago	296,518	104,063	35.1
Suburbs	304,186	53,661	17.6
DeKalb	11,531	2,818	24.4
DuPage	116,443	11,637	10.0
Franklin	4,582	1,475	32.2
Fulton	3,931	821	20.9
Grundy	6,722	1,129	16.8
Henry	5,655	973	17.2
Jackson	5,393	1,903	35.3
Jefferson	4,525	1,192	26.3
Kane	68,764	12,862	18.7
Kankakee	14,467	4,240	29.3
Kendall	18,348	1,516	8.3
Knox	5,498	1,900	34.6
Lake	96,414	13,006	13.5
LaSalle	12,554	2,932	23.4
Livingston	4,349	999	23.0
Macon	12,923	3,583	27.7
Macoupin	6,047	1,698	28.1
Madison	32,694	7,487	22.9
Marion	4,886	1,742	35.6
McHenry	41,466	3,877	9.3
McLean	19,758	3,126	15.8
Ogle	6,231	1,022	16.4
Peoria	22,186	5,183	23.4
Rock Island	17,306	4,211	24.3
St. Clair	34,195	9,462	27.7
Sangamon	24,421	5,714	23.4
Stephenson	4,996	1,718	34.4
Tazewell	16,379	2,861	17.5
Vermilion	9,436	2,553	27.1
Whiteside	6,847	1,408	20.6
Will	94,483	11,273	11.9
Williamson	8,114	1,724	21.2
Winnebago	37,323	10,607	28.4
Woodford	4,921	534	10.9
Statewide	1,548,124	331,575	21.4

**SOURCE** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2013 (3-year pooled data).

## Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), 40 Largest Counties, Tax Year 2012

	Total EITC returns	As percent of all returns	Total EITC amount (\$1,000s)	Average credit (\$)
Adams	5,443	17.7	11,654	2,141
Boone	3,764	16.0	8,759	2,327
Champaign	13,717	16.8	31,290	2,281
Clinton	2,233	12.9	4,668	2,091
Coles	4,053	19.8	8,396	2,072
Cook	478,061	20.8	1,200,493	2,511
Chicago	293,597	25.3	763,927	2,602
Suburbs	184,464	16.2	436,566	2,367
DeKalb	6,500	15.1	13,618	2,095
DuPage	44,249	10.4	92,135	2,082
Franklin	3,748	23.3	8,708	2,323
Fulton	2,813	17.9	6,009	2,136
Grundy	2,951	12.7	6,186	2,096
Henry	3,471	14.9	7,458	2,149
Jackson	4,976	22.4	10,602	2,131
Jefferson	3,472	21.7	7,967	2,295
Kane	32,434	14.7	77,133	2,378
Kankakee	10,071	20.7	24,530	2,436
Kendall	6,015	12.0	13,384	2,225
Knox	4,576	19.9	10,632	2,323
Lake	39,342	12.9	89,959	2,287
LaSalle	8,606	16.4	18,223	2,118
Livingston	2,647	15.7	5,736	2,167
Macon	10,137	21.0	24,866	2,453
Macoupin	3,568	17.5	7,765	2,176
Madison	20,164	16.8	44,506	2,207
Marion	3,831	22.3	8,664	2,262
McHenry	14,791	10.6	29,693	2,007
McLean	9,936	13.3	21,733	2,187
Ogle	3,721	15.3	7,957	2,138
Peoria	16,931	19.6	41,469	2,449
Rock Island	13,108	19.1	30,577	2,333
St. Clair	25,793	22.3	65,674	2,546
Sangamon	16,209	17.1	37,545	2,316
Stephenson	4,044	18.8	9,600	2,374
Tazewell	8,936	14.1	18,517	2,072
Vermilion	8,090	23.9	20,549	2,540
Whiteside	4,753	17.4	10,240	2,154
Will	40,472	13.6	94,367	2,332
Williamson	6,139	21.3	14,039	2,287
Winnebago	27,312	21.0	66,389	2,431
Woodford	1,898	10.8	3,926	2,068
Statewide	1,002,444	17.7	2,387,055	2,381

SOURCE Brookings Institution.

## Enrollment of Children in Medical Assistance Programs, 40 Largest Counties (June of each year)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percent change, 2005-2013
Adams	5,485	5,744	6,273	6,550	6,943	7,209	7,549	7,627	7,753	41.3
Boone	3,382	3,979	5,010	5,757	6,312	6,685	6,944	5,581	4,922	45.5
Champaign	13,207	13,770	15,297	16,346	17,562	18,910	19,734	19,928	19,199	45.4
Clinton	1,740	1,912	2,167	2,242	2,374	2,564	2,672	2,392	2,219	27.5
Coles	3,702	3,901	4,196	4,577	5,015	5,226	5,358	5,477	5,491	48.3
Cook	637,296	648,924	715,961	752,801	788,471	815,865	831,658	834,991	807,920	26.8
DeKalb	4,706	5,338	6,573	7,572	8,487	9,287	9,970	10,135	10,049	113.5
DuPage	35,710	40,114	51,640	59,270	67,995	75,317	82,057	85,031	81,074	127.0
Franklin	4,536	4,858	5,237	5,565	5,730	5,942	5,998	6,065	6,071	33.8
Fulton	3,331	3,384	3,560	3,684	3,789	3,977	4,089	4,092	4,009	20.4
Grundy	2,050	1,905	2,289	2,555	2,992	3,336	3,179	3,166	3,142	53.3
Henry	3,361	3,454	3,913	4,212	4,437	4,868	5,133	5,190	4,956	47.5
Jackson	5,342	5,436	5,963	6,137	6,437	6,648	6,751	7,170	7,039	31.8
Jefferson	4,206	4,400	4,894	5,203	5,424	5,837	6,353	6,305	6,201	47.4
Kane	41,729	46,317	59,340	67,207	76,483	83,206	85,952	88,059	87,357	109.3
Kankakee	10,094	10,668	11,904	12,835	13,956	14,536	15,057	15,675	15,576	54.3
Kendall	2,485	3,172	4,434	5,550	6,687	7,972	8,732	9,601	8,445	239.8
Knox	5,287	5,378	5,818	6,013	6,189	6,321	6,387	6,356	6,347	20.0
Lake	35,710	40,009	51,340	57,155	63,749	69,081	73,147	74,738	72,055	101.8
LaSalle	8,108	9,052	10,425	11,217	12,079	12,959	13,886	14,388	13,963	72.2
Livingston	2,703	2,886	3,226	3,374	3,600	3,765	3,938	4,058	3,111	15.1
Macon	11,580	12,036	12,711	13,100	13,612	14,270	14,660	14,650	14,362	24.0
Macoupin	3,886	3,983	4,459	4,670	4,965	5,186	5,283	5,242	4,940	27.1
Madison	20,058	21,403	23,301	24,359	26,108	27,338	27,947	28,668	28,460	41.9
Marion	4,728	4,945	5,328	5,648	5,935	6,054	6,045	6,850	7,102	50.2
McHenry	9,495	11,429	14,447	16,699	19,946	22,316	24,459	25,715	25,000	163.3
McLean	9,092	9,637	11,108	12,027	12,681	13,072	13,655	13,833	14,222	56.4
Ogle	3,709	4,322	5,207	5,779	6,338	6,806	7,302	7,288	6,735	81.6
Peoria	19,427	20,224	20,925	21,823	23,110	24,006	25,024	25,532	25,976	33.7
Rock Island	13,324	13,950	15,471	16,576	17,503	18,496	19,249	20,040	19,608	47.2
St. Clair	29,024	29,916	31,920	33,053	34,458	35,449	35,599	35,188	33,553	15.6
Sangamon	17,109	17,990	19,401	20,447	21,234	22,016	22,851	22,944	22,333	30.5
Stephenson	4,086	4,274	4,744	4,978	5,358	5,605	5,811	6,030	6,369	55.9
Tazewell	9,059	9,531	10,444	11,070	12,023	12,711	13,036	13,597	13,334	47.2
Vermilion	9,990	10,739	11,762	11,990	12,386	12,642	12,935	13,126	12,944	29.6
Whiteside	4,870	5,233	5,656	6,086	6,432	6,808	7,111	7,171	7,221	48.3
Will	30,541	34,077	42,725	48,933	56,412	62,065	66,105	67,164	64,363	110.7
Williamson	6,105	6,424	7,244	7,825	8,252	8,449	8,700	8,782	8,540	39.9
Winnebago	28,048	30,246	34,334	36,762	39,717	41,861	43,239	45,248	45,375	61.8
Woodford	1,725	1,840	2,056	2,152	2,353	2,349	2,079	1,667	1,466	-15.0
Statewide	1,157,980	1,214,714	1,363,789	1,455,172	1,553,255	1,630,495	1,679,232	1,697,319	1,647,167	42.2

**NOTE** Medical assistance programs include Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and All Kids expansion.

**SOURCE** Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

# Essays

The essays in this section provide a set of broader policy perspectives on the complex issues raised in *Illinois Kids Count 2015*. The authors come from diverse backgrounds, including government, advocacy groups, community-based organizations, and universities. Many of the essays address issues related to young children, including early childhood development, preschool, home visiting programs, and innovative two-generation educational programs. Other essays focus on afterschool programs, juvenile justice, Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit, child care, low-wage work, and suburban poverty. All of the essays discuss strategies for confronting poverty and creating opportunity. We thank the authors for sharing their experience and expertise.





# POVERTY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Children in poverty begin school well behind their more affluent peers and the gaps persist over the school years. In 2011, researchers Jane Waldfogel and Elizabeth Washbrook found that at age four, children from families in the poorest income quintile score on average at the 32nd percentile of the national distribution on math and the 34th percentile in a test of literacy while children in the richest quintile score at the 69th percentile on math and literacy. Gaps in conduct problems and attention/hyperactivity are also apparent albeit less pronounced. In a 2010 study, my colleagues and I found that children from poor families also go on to complete less schooling, work less, and earn less. Understanding the origins and persistence of these differences in fortunes is a vital step for ensuring the prosperity of future generations.

Low-income families experience higher levels of stress than more affluent families and these disparities may affect children's development. Furthermore, a 2011 study by Dean Spears found that conditions of poverty and scarcity not only create psychological distress, but also deplete important cognitive resources for parents and their children.

According to economic theory, children from poor families lag behind their economically advantaged counterparts in part because their parents have less time and money to invest in them. Studies show that investments in high-quality child care and education, housing in good neighborhoods, and rich learning experiences enhance children's development, as do investments of parents' time.

Emerging evidence from neuroscience and social epidemiology further suggests that the *timing* of child poverty matters, and that for some outcomes later in life, particularly those related to educational attainment and health, poverty *early* in a child's life may be particularly harmful. Both human and animal studies highlight the critical importance of early childhood for brain development and for establishing the neural functions and

structures that will shape future cognitive, social, emotional, and health outcomes.

The goals of childhood anti-poverty policies are often characterized in terms of their impacts on children's life chances. The existing research suggests that greater policy attention should be given to remediating situations involving deep and persistent poverty *in utero* and occurring early in childhood. In terms of indicators, it is crucial to track rates of poverty among children—especially deep poverty occurring early in childhood—to inform policy discussions regarding children's well-being.

This evidence base points to several important policy implications. Sanctions and other regulations that deny benefits that would improve the economic security of families with very young children appear particularly harmful. It would be more effective to advance policies that provide more income to families with young children. For example, in the case of work support programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, this might mean extending more generous credits to families with young children. This policy change could significantly boost school readiness and academic achievement for children in poverty.

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# GREAT TEACHING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Through every debate about education policy runs a widely shared goal: children deserve great teachers. There may be fierce arguments about the best strategies for achieving that goal, but the goal itself is rarely if ever questioned. To some, however, that goal only applies to children ages five and up. But we know the first five years of life are critical developmentally, and that's why great teaching in those years is also of paramount importance.

An increasing body of science shows that child development is heavily influenced by how children interact with adults. Children in their first five years benefit from trusting and supportive relationships with grown-ups, and that includes teachers. This means that the best teachers in the birth-to-five-years can have a significant long-term impact on a child's developmental trajectory.

Great teaching is particularly important for children in low-income families. Research shows that the language gap for children opens in the first year of life, and only widens from there. Quality early learning has a greater effect on low-income children, but they are the least likely to receive it. Even though Illinois is a national leader in serving children under age four, that doesn't mean we're anywhere close to serving enough of them; while about 40 percent of Illinois children are in low-income families, under 5 percent of all children ages birth to three are receiving publicly funded education and home visiting programs, and only 18 percent of 3-year-olds participate in state-funded preschool.

In many ways, the best teaching of young children looks a lot like the best teaching of older children. It's a lot of looking children in the eye, asking them open-ended questions, and engaging in a conversation about the answer. It's taking a child's natural curiosity about language, math, and science, and helping them understand the world around them through active learning and exploration. It's

about recognizing a child's emotional needs and helping the child to feel safe, secure, and connected to the other people in the classroom. It's about understanding the child's cultural context, and for teachers of Illinois' many dual-language learners, it literally means speaking the child's native language. The principles of great teaching are the same throughout a child's education, even if in the early years the content is *Green Eggs and Ham* rather than *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Sustaining great teaching in early learning requires the same things it requires throughout the K-12 years: rigorous and developmentally appropriate learning standards, an engaging curriculum, and teachers who are given what they need to excel—including strong preparation, instructional leadership at the school level, and support from teaching colleagues. Great teachers are made, not born, through organizations that support their continuous improvement. Keeping great teachers in early childhood classrooms also requires paying them as the skilled professionals they are.

Illinois has taken important steps toward providing low-income children with great teachers in the first five years, including a system that measures teaching quality and provides supports for improvement. Great teaching alone won't lift children out of poverty, but if Illinois continues to improve the quality of teaching for young children, these efforts will have a long-term positive impact on our state.

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## ELLIOT REGENSTEIN

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# THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON YOUNG LATINO CHILDREN

**Nationwide, 33 percent of Latino children live in poverty, compared with 22 percent of all children, even though three quarters of Latino children live in households with at least one working parent. The adverse impact of poverty on the physical, psychological, and cognitive development of these children jeopardizes their futures.**

Structural economic and social factors create conditions that trap families in poverty despite their hard work and aspiration for a better future. For the past 30 years, our economy's transformation has narrowed the path to upward mobility. Higher-wage manufacturing jobs moved overseas and low wage jobs in the service sector became the dominant source of employment for individuals with low education levels. Moreover, many working families lost their jobs and houses during the Great Recession, throwing them into poverty.

Access to quality early education provides opportunities to lift children out of poverty and is a proven investment resulting in increased educational attainment, economic productivity, and social stability. Gads Hill Center on the southwest side of Chicago provides early education programs to low-income Latino families. Most parents work in low-wage jobs and face challenging working conditions. Because these jobs do not offer paid time off, parents lose income to take care of a sick child or a family emergency. Breaking the cycle of poverty requires policies that supplement the child-rearing resources available to disadvantaged families. Continual cuts in government funding weaken such efforts to reduce poverty and inequality.

Although Illinois' Preschool for All program has been a model nationally for access to early childhood education, enrollment of Latino children lags behind other groups. Only about 40 percent of Latino 3- and 4-year olds in Illinois attend some type of preschool program, compared with 58 percent of White and 55 percent of

African-American children. Early childhood is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for every child, considering the rapid brain development that occurs before age five. These persistent disparities in early education access undermine efforts to reduce the achievement gaps in school.

Society must make a greater commitment to invest in all children's futures and overcome the barriers to Latino enrollment in early childhood programs, including lack of information, language barriers, and lack of infrastructure in Latino neighborhoods. Areas with the highest concentration of Latino children in the state, such as Brighton Park in southwest Chicago, need capital investments to provide early education facilities for more than 3,000 children under age five. Currently, working families heavily rely on relatives or home child care. Last October, Gads Hill Center received a \$2.5 million capital grant from the State to build a center for 150 children. This covers only half the cost, so additional public and private funds are required to make this dream a reality.

Developing policies and implementing strategies to lift Latino families out of poverty is an investment in our nation's future. Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group, with one in five school-age children in the U.S. expected to be Latino by 2020. This population must become better educated to ensure high productivity, global competitiveness, and civic engagement. Increasing access to high-quality early education programs is essential to ensure all children in America can build a promising future.

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**MARICELA GARCIA**  
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# EXPANDING EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH-NEED COMMUNITIES

In 2012, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) launched an early learning initiative dedicated to improving the life prospects of young children in four low-income housing developments, including Altgeld Gardens on the south side of Chicago.

This multifaceted community-driven effort is organized around the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition, a broad-based coalition of some 30 organizations, schools, city agencies, and residents working toward the common goal of assuring that all children in this high-poverty community will be on track to succeed by third grade, a critical benchmark for future education and life success.

The Coalition's most significant accomplishment to date is the Altgeld-Riverdale Parenting Program (ARPP), launched in January 2014 and free to expectant mothers 21-years-old and younger living in Altgeld Gardens and three adjacent communities. This program provides doula services, which involve supports for expectant mothers through an infant's first two months, followed by home visiting services for an additional two years. The participating young moms are recruited in a variety of ways, largely, however, via referrals from schools, community members, the local WIC office, churches, and community-based organizations.

The ARPP was created in response to a needs assessment performed by the Erikson Institute, which identified the absence of doula and home visiting services as the community's highest priority need. In addition to the enthusiastic support of the Coalition, ARPP's formation depended on securing external funding and identifying a skilled provider familiar with community needs. After a thorough search, BPI contracted with Catholic Charities of Chicago to provide both birth coaching and home visiting services.

ARPP is modeled after the Ounce of Prevention Fund's evidence-based early childhood home visiting

framework, "Parents as Teachers." Accordingly, the program focuses on increasing parental knowledge of early childhood developmental needs and good parenting practices; identifying developmental delays and health issues early; and increasing school readiness and school success.

ARPP assists parents in a number of ways. Family support workers (home visitors) share information on infant developmental phases and the importance of talking and reading to babies. They also screen children for developmental delays, help register children for preschool programs, and help participants identify and achieve personal educational and employment goals. The program also provides weekly support groups for pregnant and parenting moms. Group discussions cover a variety of issues, such as post-partum depression, difficulty with fussy babies, and relationship and family challenges, as well as problems at work or school.

To ensure quality and track impact, the program is overseen through a combination of monthly progress reports from the provider, Catholic Charities, and in-person discussions of quarterly tracking reports prepared by the Ounce of Prevention.

Research is increasingly documenting the positive contributions that doula and home visiting programs make to the cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development of children and to strengthening the bonds of attachment between parent and child. In this context, the Altgeld-Riverdale Parenting Program is fulfilling a singularly vital role in the lives of young children and parents in these communities—a role which has been made possible through the enthusiastic embrace of the community.

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## HOY MCCONNELL

Executive Director,  
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# TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

**Children who live in poverty are at a significant disadvantage in terms of their educational and economic trajectories. At school entry, low-income children are almost a year behind their higher-income peers, and this gap remains as children progress in school.**

Low-income students are then less likely to complete high school and attain a postsecondary certificate or degree. For low-income parents, education and income are particularly related. Over two-thirds of low-income parents with children under age three have a high school degree or less.

Two-generation approaches—targeting parents and children together—represent a promising and innovative antipoverty strategy and are gaining momentum across the United States. These programs link intensive, high-quality education and career-building programs for low-income parents *simultaneously* with early childhood education for their children.

Early childhood education programs—often viewed by parents as safe, trusting environments—may offer an ideal context for recruiting parents into postsecondary education or training programs and promoting their educational success over time. Moreover, parents may be more motivated to improve their education when they experience their own children’s educational advancement through the support of early education.

Two-generation programs that promote parents’ education and income may in turn influence children’s learning and development. Parents with more education and training could provide more cognitively stimulating home environments and have a stronger focus on literacy and numeracy at home, which then may help promote children’s readiness for school. In addition, more educated parents may have greater access to higher paying jobs with more standard work hours, which could promote parents’ work-family balance. All of these improvements could theoretically influence children’s own future economic

stability, particularly for children who are also receiving the positive benefits of early childhood education.

Although the theory behind two-generation programming is compelling, studies of these programs are still in their nascent stages. Researchers at Northwestern University are currently leading an evaluation of *CareerAdvance*®, one of the only operational two-generation programs in the country. *CareerAdvance*®, launched in 2008 by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, combines Head Start services for children with education and training in the healthcare sector for parents. The program also provides a number of supportive elements, including career coaches, a peer cohort model, and incentives for performance and attendance.

The main evaluation of *CareerAdvance*® is ongoing; however, preliminary results suggest that parents in the program have had relatively high rates of success. After 16 months in the program, 76 percent of parents achieved at least one workforce-applicable certificate. This is remarkable compared to the rates of average community college degree completion across the country, where only 27 percent of full-time students and 15 percent of part-time students complete a degree after six years.

These findings suggest that—beyond just preparing children for school—early childhood education programs could provide parents tools for increasing their education and eventually lifting their families out of poverty. Future work may implement various two-generation models to explore whether and in what contexts two-generation programs can increase educational and economic wellbeing from one generation to the next.

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# WHERE POSSIBILITY LIVES

Children from low-income households face many challenges. Some of these difficulties are obvious: lack of resources, food scarcity, and violent neighborhoods. Other struggles are less visible, including summer learning loss and low self-esteem. Something even less obvious—but a formidable barrier to success—is the aspirational gap. For too many children, generational cycles of poverty and violence threaten their ability to persist, envision a productive life, and proceed on a path to success. Out-of-school time programs provide a systemic solution to overcome this aspirational gap, empowering children to recognize their potential and break generational cycles of poverty and violence.

If our common goal is to bring children up and out of poverty, out-of-school time programs matter on a number of levels. At Chicago Youth Centers, we recognize that the most significant barrier facing low-income children is this aspirational gap. Too many of these children cannot aspire to be or do more because they cannot see the possibilities that exist within themselves or beyond their communities. Well-designed out-of-school time programs give children the tools and resources they need to succeed in school and in life.

Programming with this kind of power does not occur in a vacuum. By implementing a curriculum that emphasizes the Four C's—creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking—staff at Chicago Youth Centers have witnessed incredible transformations within our kids. Of the nearly 900 children aged 6 to 12 participating in our programs, 91 percent maintained or improved essential life-skills; 95 percent reported a deeper engagement in academics; and 98 percent progressed to the next grade. Out-of-school time programs introduce children to educational and professional opportunities they would not otherwise encounter, and most importantly, nurture children's ability to dream and aspire.

Effective out-of-school time programs surround children with the social capital they need—safe spaces, family engagement, community resources,

and caring adults—to manage every stage in their academic and emotional development. Children become more confident and realize their unique strengths. They develop lasting relationships and learn to collaborate. They make better life choices and let their talents shine. They have fun, but it is fun with a purpose. Out-of-school time programs not only provide safe havens where children can learn and thrive, but they also have positive effects on families. Parents can go to work knowing that their children are advancing in productive ways and can receive support from program staff.

Last year, many news outlets featured a story about a child who received cochlear implants. When the child heard his father's voice for the first time, joy, wonder, and knowledge immediately spread across his face. When kids experience something profound—beautiful music, art, or a success story from someone with a similar background—their lives can be changed forever. Out-of-school time programs provide this opportunity for change. They give children the ability to dream as they make their way between childhood and adulthood, between today and tomorrow. Chicago Youth Centers has dedicated its work to deeply enriching our kids' lives and putting them on that path to success. We know that out-of-school time programs are a place where possibility lives.

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## BARBARA MOSACCHIO

President/CEO, Chicago Youth Centers

## LATASHA BATTIE

Program Director of 21st Century, Chicago Youth Centers



# EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

**Illinois has experienced an impressive 12-year drop in the number of children sent to secure detention centers. Many factors, including the general drop in crime over the same period, contributed to the decline, which began its most dramatic fall in 2007.**

Economics may have played a part. The Great Recession reduced the resources of local governments responsible for funding pre-trial and post-trial detention of juveniles. Another factor was the development of better practices for determining which children need to be detained because they pose a greater risk to public safety or failed to appear in court. We cannot predict and should not rely on fluctuations in the crime rate to determine the number of juveniles in detention. There are better and more informed practices that hold great promise for maintaining or reducing the number of incarcerated children.

Advances in science and law support a wiser use of detention. Growth in the knowledge of adolescent brain development has created wider understanding of problematic youth behavior and the ability to analyze the risk of future criminality. The U.S. Supreme Court and courts in many states have recognized that, in comparison to adults, juveniles have diminished capabilities in regard to judgment and recognition of the consequences of their decisions and actions. It's no secret that youth are impulsive and extraordinarily influenced by their peers. Because these conditions are not intentional, the law treats them as factors that reduce culpability.

Fortunately for children, best practices in juvenile justice have been informed by high-quality research conducted with the assistance of foundations, universities, and the federal government. For instance, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative has created

major change through the use of risk assessment instruments to determine whether a child should be detained. If public safety or the likelihood of failure to appear in court does not require a locked facility, then the system can use less expensive and less restrictive community alternatives, including day and evening reporting centers and electronic home monitoring. In addition, we have scientific guidance on the impact of jailing children from the National Academy of Science's 2014 report on juvenile justice reform, which should be relied on to avoid toxic effects.

If we make decisions based on objective and scientifically sound principles, we can increase public safety and improve positive outcomes for children. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and stakeholders at every system decision point must be aware of the science which should drive appropriate practices including alternatives to detention.

Poverty alone is not a predictor of criminal conduct by an individual child. Combined with deficits in education, health care, mental health and behavioral health care, and trauma informed services, those children who live in poverty stricken environments are more likely to be detained than children of higher income families. Reliance on science in developing tools and making decisions about incarceration can improve public safety, decrease the cost for taxpayers and, most important, make it more likely that kids coming into contact with the system will not go deeper into the system and later into adult prisons but will live safer and more successful lives.

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**HON. GEORGE W. TIMBERLAKE**  
Retired Judge;  
Chairman, Illinois  
Juvenile Justice  
Commission



# THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAID FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

**There's no such thing as an undeserving four-year-old. Whatever else we may disagree on, most can agree that children are entitled to adequate health care, and over one-third of Illinois kids receive this health care through Medicaid and related medical assistance programs.**

Far from a burden, this is one of our state's most essential programs, keeping kids healthy and providing care when they're not. Medicaid is one of the largest providers of vaccinations in the state. It also brings billions of federal dollars into Illinois every year, far more than any other program.

As a pediatrician, I see the benefits of the program every day. Parents, many of whom struggle with precarious economic situations, can still count on their kids getting health care thanks to Medicaid. These parents typically work, raise families, and go about their day much like everyone else. And their children, like all children, require a usual source of care, a "medical home," in order to stay healthy. Children with asthma, for example, are far less likely to miss school (and their parents less likely to miss work) if they have a health care provider who regularly sees them. Absent Medicaid, these kids would have no place to go other than the emergency room, where treatment is more expensive and illness more severe.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, most primary care providers and hospitals participate in Medicaid. Prior studies of provider capacity for children are reassuring, and the program enjoys high satisfaction ratings from both patients and providers. Measurements of quality have also improved in

recent years. The program even provides bonus reimbursement for providers who see their patients regularly and give them quality care.

Illinois Medicaid is now transitioning to a "multi-payer" managed care model, and from my position on the statewide Medicaid Advisory Committee I have had a front-row seat from which to watch this process play out. Providers, who understand firsthand how important health care is to young, growing children, are doing our best to navigate this new system. In the past, we only had to deal with the state or its Primary Care Case Management vendor—now we will have to negotiate individual arrangements with multiple insurers in order to keep taking care of our patients. How well we maintain this "continuity of care" will likely determine the overall success of the transition. So far, this has proven challenging as children may be assigned to insurance plans in which their providers do not necessarily participate. Some providers have not signed with any plan, effectively ending their participation in the program. It will take vigilance on the part of every corner of the health care spectrum—from patients to providers to hospitals to insurers to the state—to ensure this process goes as smoothly as possible.

The children who depend on Medicaid for their health care deserve nothing less.

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**EDWARD A. PONT, M.D.**  
Chair, Government  
Affairs Committee,  
Illinois Chapter, American  
Academy of Pediatrics

# THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT WORKS

**The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has given working families a step up since the federal government enacted it in 1975. The EITC helps families who work but struggle to get by on low wages: it allows these families to keep more of their income. It helps families pay for the things that allow them to keep working, like car repairs and child care.**

The EITC is the single most effective policy tool for lifting low-income families out of poverty. Each year between 2010–2012, the EITC kept about 300,000 Illinoisans out of poverty, nearly half of them children. The EITC also improves kids' chances of success as adults, because young children who grow up in families who can cover the basic necessities do better in school and in the working world.

In addition to reducing poverty, the EITC promotes work because for those at the lowest income levels, the amount of the credit increases as earnings increase. After reaching a maximum amount, the credit is gradually phased out at higher income levels. The additional money low-income working families have to spend on goods and services increases local economic activity across the state.

The EITC has the support of liberals and conservatives. When he signed a major national expansion, President Reagan called the EITC the most “family friendly” measure that had come across his desk—praise that could easily have come from someone on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

Noting the success of the federal EITC, 25 states, including Illinois, have implemented state-level EITCs, usually set as a percentage of the

federal credit. Illinois' EITC is currently 10 percent of the federal credit. A family of four making \$13,000 in 2013 saw their income increase by about \$300. The state EITC has a tremendous impact not only on a family's ability to pay for things that keep them working, but also on our state's economy. In 2012, the Illinois EITC generated over \$300 million dollars in economic activity.

While we are proud of our efforts to lift working families out of poverty, more can and should be done to expand the EITC in Illinois. In 2012, about 630,000 Illinois children (1 in 5) lived in poverty. Since 1999, the number of children in poverty has increased by more than 175,000—enough to fill Soldier Field nearly three times.

We are working to expand our credit to 20 percent of the federal EITC over the next few years. We plan to reintroduce our companion bills in the new session of the Illinois General Assembly. Former Governor Pat Quinn was an enthusiastic champion of the EITC. We are hopeful we can convince new Governor Bruce Rauner to join the chorus.

Visit [EITCWorks.org](http://EITCWorks.org) to see how the EITC is helping families and communities across Illinois.

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**STATE SENATOR  
JACQUELINE  
COLLINS**  
16th District

**STATE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
BARBARA  
FLYNN CURRIE**  
25th District

# CHILD CARE SUPPORTS FOR LOW-INCOME PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

**Child care is a vital component of contemporary families' lives. Not only does it help parents balance work and family, it also helps launch children's developmental trajectories toward a productive and healthy adulthood.**

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## RACHEL A. GORDON

Professor of Sociology  
and Associate Director  
of the Institute of  
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Affairs, University  
of Illinois at Chicago

Paying for this vital support is difficult for any family, but especially for those with the fewest resources. A recent national report reiterated the high cost of care, especially relative to other common household expenses. In the Midwest, the report showed that the annual cost of sending two children to full-time center care approached \$17,000, exceeding housing (\$15,000), college tuition (\$9,000), transportation (\$8,000), food (\$6,000), and utilities (\$3,000) in a household's budget. Illinois was in the top ten "least affordable" states for center care of infants and preschoolers, with annual costs being about 40 to 50 percent of the state median income for families headed by single mothers and 10 to 15 percent for married couples.

Yet, it is just this center-based care that research consistently shows is positively associated with academic school readiness, especially for preschoolers. For instance, a recent study using a nationally-representative data set found that 4-year-olds cared for in centers averaged higher reading and math scores than children cared for exclusively in homes, even when the center care was only part time and regardless of whether the home-based care was with a parent or in a family child care setting. The average differences in reading between children attending centers and homes approached the size of the difference in reading scores between children whose mothers had a bachelor's degree versus a high school diploma (adjusting for other characteristics, such as the child's earlier pre-reading skills).

Illinois has important policy systems in place that support parents' and children's access to these care settings. However, the state's fiscal crisis and

Great Recession have punched and revealed holes in these systems that are a cause of great concern. State funding for preschool has dropped 25 percent since 2009, and child care assistance was severely underfunded for the current fiscal year. Parental job losses have had consequential ripple effects as well. When children's enrollment is dependent on parents' employment, disruptions in parents' jobs can result in children losing early learning opportunities and further financial strain on care centers. A final vulnerability, I would argue, is that the state failed to pair its investments in early childhood throughout the 2000s with as much and as rigorous "R&D" spending as it could. As such, Illinois missed the opportunity to fully document the payoff from investments in quality early learning and care.

Despite these challenges, the state has some positive opportunities ahead. New federal dollars could help the state begin to build back its preschool programs. These federal dollars, which are contingent on additional state funding, include monitoring requirements, the data from which could also be used to assure more sustained commitments to early care and learning in the future by providing rigorous documentation of the returns on such investments in Illinois. In addition, the recent reauthorization of federal child care funding includes a provision requiring 12-month continuous eligibility for child care assistance. Taking full advantage of these opportunities can help mend the holes in state child care systems, so all families—including those with the fewest personal finances—have the support they need for productive employment and life success.

# JOB QUALITY FOR WOMEN: WAGES AND BEYOND

**Although the economy is improving, low-wage jobs are growing faster than other jobs, and the quality of these jobs continues to deteriorate. Low-quality jobs pay poverty-level wages, have irregular work schedules, lack family-supporting benefits, and offer few if any opportunities for advancement. Women, specifically women of color, remain concentrated in low-paid occupations and make the majority of low-paid workers.**

Low-paid women often lack more than decent pay; they lack benefits such as paid sick days and medical leave that allow them to care for themselves and their families. When their children are sick, they often must choose between staying home to care for their children at the risk of losing their jobs or sending their sick children to school. Their hours are irregular; they might work 25 hours in one week and 10 in another. They work two, sometimes three, part-time jobs, just to make ends meet. Their unpredictable schedules make financial stability impossible and returning to school unthinkable.

Low-wage work also negatively impacts children. Women are increasingly the sole or co-breadwinner of their families—they need all the work hours they can get just to afford the basics. As a result, it is extremely difficult for these hard-working parents to also give their children the time and attention they need. For example, a mother who works several jobs to provide financially will be hard-pressed to get time off to attend a parent-teacher conference or other school event. By reducing parental involvement in school, low-income jobs also have the effect of limiting children's future chances for success.

Efforts to improve job quality are critical for reducing poverty. Many low-paid workers are just one paycheck, sick child, or broken-down car away from economic disaster. Although it is often

assumed that safety net programs primarily support people who are not working, a significant portion of safety-net resources go to workers with meager wages who cannot meet their families' basic needs. The growing number of low-wage, low-quality jobs will increase demand for these and other basic social programs.

It doesn't have to be this way. High-quality jobs are good for children and parents, are in the best interest of employers, and in the long run, benefit communities and society. Better pay and meaningful benefits enable parents to have both the resources and time needed to help their children succeed in school. Businesses profit from reduced turnover and greater customer satisfaction. Communities benefit when low-wage workers have more dollars to spend in local economies, and society in general would also benefit through reduced need for public subsidies for working people.

We must develop national, state, and local policies—such as increasing the minimum wage and providing stable work schedules—that enable people to care for their families, plan their finances, and enroll in school or training. These public policies would “raise the floor,” but voluntary actions by employers to improve work and wages are also essential. By improving the quality of jobs, we can help ensure that all our families and communities can thrive.

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Executive Director,  
Women Employed

**NATALY BARRERA**  
Senior Policy Associate,  
Women Employed

# SUBURBAN POVERTY AND THE CHALLENGES OF BOTH PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND PUBLIC POLICY

**I write this from my son's hockey game in a northern Cook County suburb, an affluent community with top-notch schools, expensive extra-curricular activities (like hockey!), vital retail, and a robust civic and cultural milieu. I am distracted by the local poverty that seems invisible, but is definitely not absent.**

In contrast to common perceptions and stereotypes, the fastest growing poverty populations nationwide are in suburban areas, a fact spotlighted by Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube at the Brookings Institution.

In the suburbs of metropolitan Chicago, more than 550,000 people lived below poverty level in 2012, about twice the number in 1999. Unfortunately, the critical resources that help alleviate poverty haven't kept pace: Suburban communities often lack adequate affordable housing, food pantries, and other critical social services that help families regain stability and self-sufficiency.

While many suburbs are ill-equipped to tackle the challenges associated with growing poverty, innovative housing and community development strategies are emerging in the Chicago region. Core to these local efforts is collaboration—across municipalities, government agencies, and public and private sectors.

One example is the response to the 2008 housing crisis by more than 20 municipalities in Chicago's southern suburbs. These areas experienced sharp increases in poverty and were the hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. In response, these jurisdictions chose not to compete for needed resources, but instead collaborated first on a federal redevelopment grant and ultimately leveraged a range of public and private investments and tools. Thanks to new resources, these communities redeveloped previously uninhabitable properties and made other strategic investments to increase jobs and stabilize the region.

A second example is the Regional Housing Initiative (RHI), which is designed to increase

affordable rental housing options in “opportunity areas” throughout the Chicago region. RHI is a collaboration of diverse stakeholders including public housing authorities, state and federal agencies, and local non-profit organizations. In response to fragmented federal funding for housing assistance in the suburbs, RHI pooled the resources of nine public housing authorities to allow families who were on waiting lists for rental assistance to move to communities with good schools, jobs, public transit, and other amenities. With the opportunity to live in a mixed-income or supportive housing community instead of a high-poverty area, children in these families are experiencing better health and school performance.

These two examples—the collaborations of the suburban municipalities and the RHI public housing authorities—involve arduous work and require local leadership, capacity building, flexibility, coordination, and state and federal policy changes. However, they are also replicable and scalable, and thus promising for public policy.

There is evidence of continued progress. Cook County is scaling up place-based collaboration efforts through its new “Planning for Progress” strategic plan, and several federal programs to support systemic changes to tackle poverty are now available to suburban communities.

With this momentum, hockey moms and policymakers alike can resolve that our stereotypes of poverty, and thus our perceptions of the possible, don't interfere with permanent solutions.

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## ROBIN SNYDERMAN

Principal and Co-Founder  
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and Brookings Institution  
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## KIDS COUNT Data Center

The Annie E. Casey's Foundation's updated KIDS COUNT Data Center is an online, searchable database that provides access to hundreds of national, state, and local-level child well-being indicators related to education, employment and income, health, poverty, and youth risk factors. New site features include improved search options; more attractive and easier to create tables, maps and graphs; and better ways to share information through social media on how children are faring.

### MOBILE SITE

All indicators currently found on the KIDS COUNT Data Center can be accessed quickly and easily anytime, anywhere on your mobile device at: [mobile.kidscount.org](http://mobile.kidscount.org)

Access the Illinois KIDS COUNT profile page at: [datacenter.kidscount.org/data#IL](http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#IL)

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The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of Voices for Illinois Children alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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