

# Parents and the Labor Force

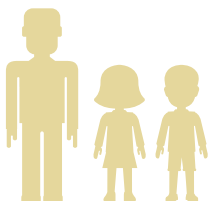
THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CHICAGO hears from people across the Midwest about how a lack of access to childcare can make it difficult for employers to find and retain workers and for workers to work or actively seek work to provide for their families. When a person is working or actively seeking work, they are considered a part of the labor force. As part of our targeted effort to understand how access to childcare can affect employment and the economy, **we share these data on parents age 25 to 54 living with children.**



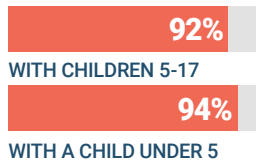
## Parents are essential to the U.S. labor force

Parents with **children 17 and under** are **about half** of the 25-to-54-year-old labor force. **Over 50 million people.**

Those with a **child younger than 5** are **just under 20%** of the 25-to-54-year-old labor force. **Almost 20 million people.**



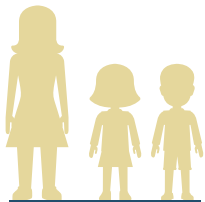
FATHERS



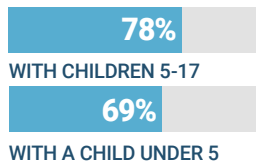
## Labor force participation is different for mothers and fathers and by age of children

**Fathers** with a child younger than 5 have **about the same labor force participation rate** as fathers with children between 5 and 17.

**Mothers** with a child younger than 5 have a **lower labor force participation rate** than mothers with children between 5 and 17.

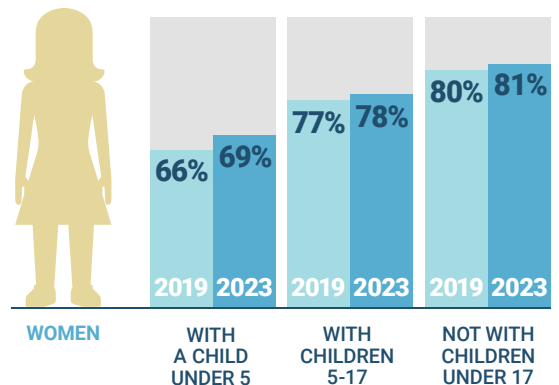


MOTHERS



## More mothers are joining the labor force

The labor force participation rate for **women** is **higher** than it was prior to the pandemic, especially for **mothers with a child younger than 5.**

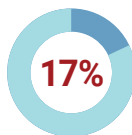


## Childcare access can be a barrier to employment

Parents who are out of the labor force, want a job, and who cite childcare problems as the main reason they are **not looking for work:**

### WOMEN

with a child **under 5**

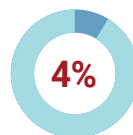


with children **5-17**

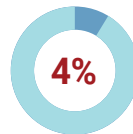


### MEN

with a child **under 5**



with children **5-17**



**NOTES:** Numbers are approximate. Statistics on the percent of parents in the labor force and on the main reason a parent is not looking for work are six-month averages for July - December 2023. Statistics on labor force participation rates are 12-month averages for January - December 2019 and January - December 2023. Each labor force participation rate is the percentage of the applicable civilian population that is in the labor force. Source: Current Population Survey via IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

