Illinois's Children of Immigrants

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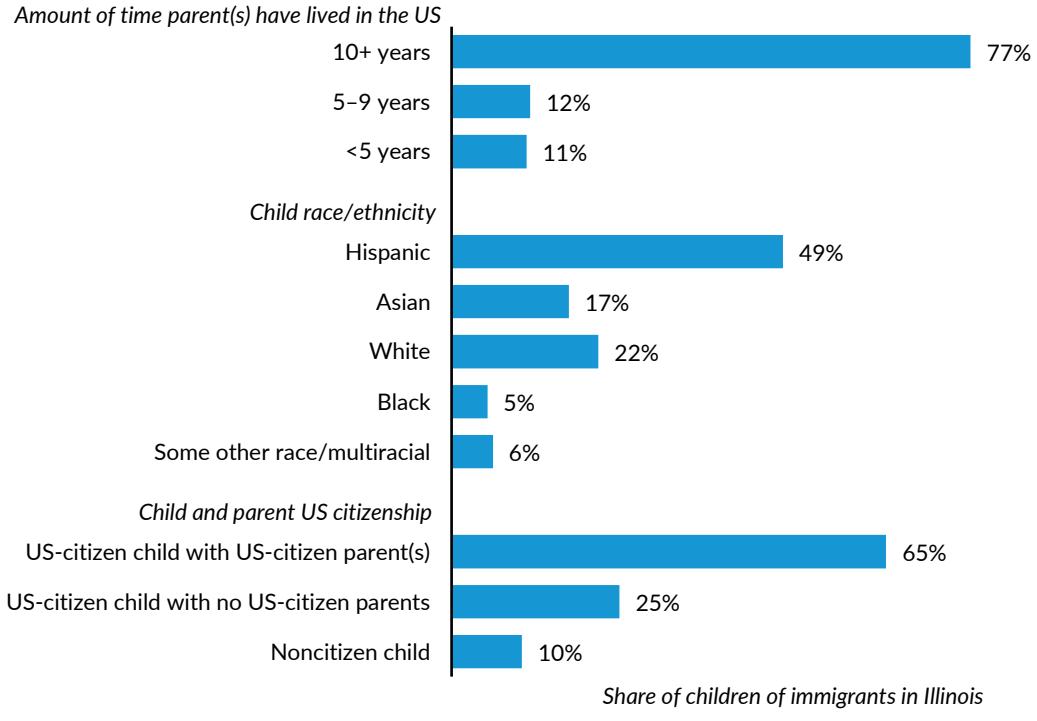
In 2023–24, one in four children in the US (26 percent) and a similar share in Illinois (26 percent) had one or more immigrant parents or were immigrants themselves. These children are poised to be key members of Illinois's workforce and taxpayer base, and understanding their characteristics can inform state and local efforts to support communities at a time of significant policy change and difficulty for many working families, and as many immigrant families with children face increased stress and disruptions to education and other activities essential to children's health, family employment, and community participation.

ILLINOIS IS HOME TO 707,000 CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

In Illinois, 49 percent of children of immigrants are Hispanic and 22 percent are white. Most children of immigrants in the state (90 percent) are US citizens. Most children of immigrants and their families are firmly rooted in the US: of the 707,000 children of immigrants in Illinois, the vast majority (77 percent) have one or more immigrant parents who have been in the US at least 10 years (figure 1). Children of immigrants in Illinois make up substantial shares of all child age groups, including 22 percent of children ages 0 to 3 and 23 percent of those ages 4 to 5 (figure 2).

FIGURE 1

Children of Immigrants in Illinois Are Mostly Children of Color and US Citizens, and Most Are in Families That Have Been in the US for Over a Decade

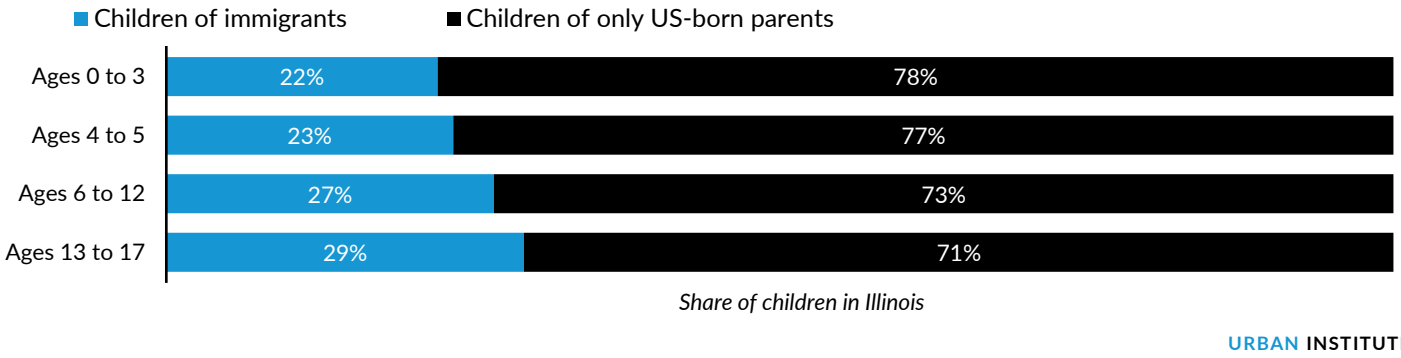


Source: Authors' analysis of pooled estimates from the 2023–24 American Community Survey.

Notes: Children who are Asian, Black, white, or some other race or multiracial are not Hispanic. Estimates may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. For two-immigrant-parent families, "amount of time parent(s) have lived in the US" reflects the parent who immigrated most recently.

FIGURE 2

Children of Immigrants in Illinois Make Up a Substantial Share of Children at All Age Groups



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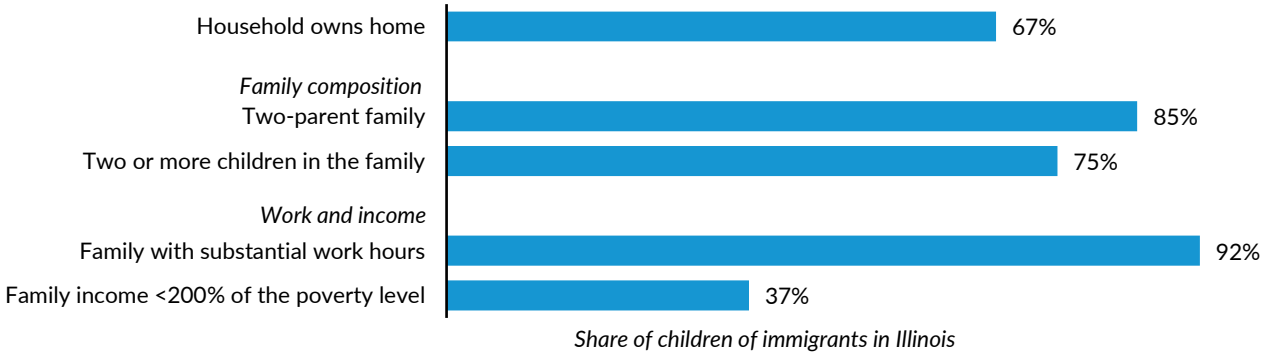
Source: Authors' analysis of pooled estimates from the 2023–24 American Community Survey.

DISRUPTING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES' LIVES COULD WORSEN ECONOMIC STRAIN

Most children of immigrants in Illinois are in two-parent families, meaning they may be able to rely on resources such as multiple incomes and caregivers. Three-quarters are in families with two or more children. And two-thirds are in households that own their home (figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Most Children of Immigrants in Illinois Are in Working Households with Two-Parent Families



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Source: Authors' analysis of pooled estimates from the 2023–24 American Community Survey.
Notes: Substantial work hours means all adults in the family worked 1,000 hours or more on average, or 1,800 hours or more combined, in the prior year.

Most children of immigrants are US citizens and eligible for public benefit programs on the same basis as children in US-born families. Yet immigration-related concerns can discourage many eligible families from participating in safety net programs, even when they face significant material hardship and a challenging economic climate that affects all families. In Illinois, 37 percent of children of immigrants are in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($62,400 for a family of four in 2024), even though 92 percent are in families with substantial work hours.

ABOUT THE DATA

This fact sheet draws on data from the Urban Institute's Children of Immigrants map feature, available at https://apps.urban.org/features/children-of-immigrants/. The data come from pooled estimates for 2023 and 2024 from the American Community Survey. These data were first published in 2016 and have been updated annually since. For more information about the data, see our technical appendix at https://www.urban.org/research/publication/state-by-state-look-children-immigrants.

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