

# Supporting Young Parents as They Advance Their Education and Careers

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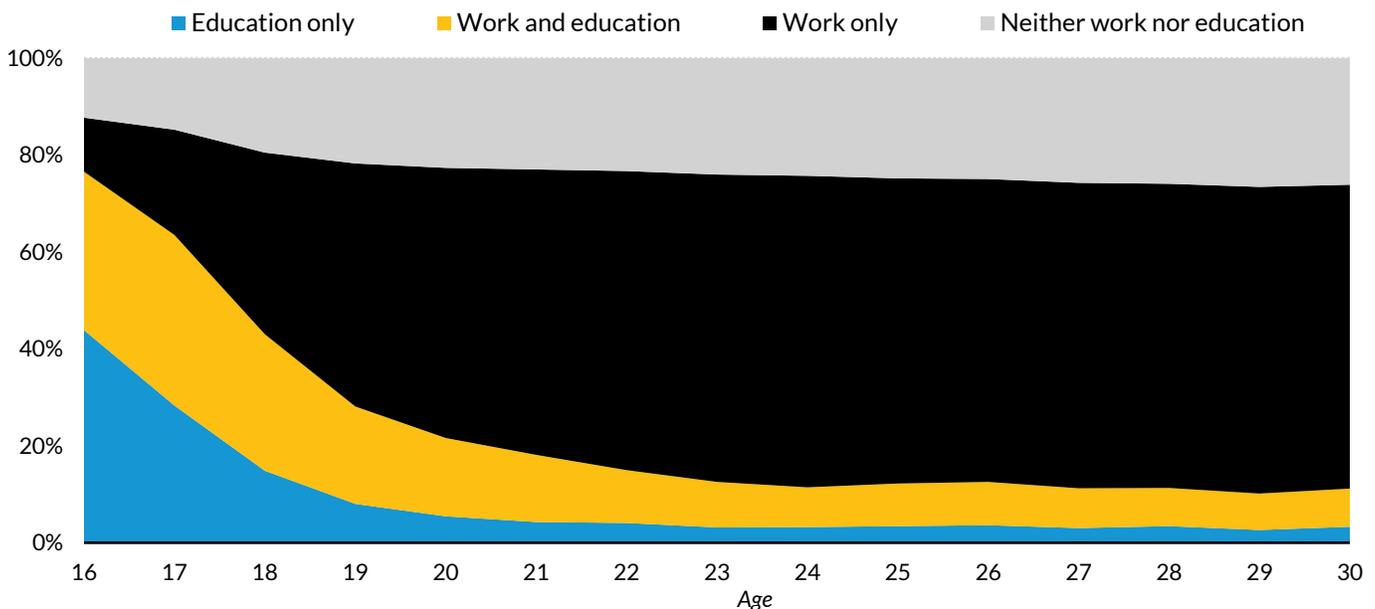
Approximately 43 percent of US children are born to parents who had their first child when they were younger than 25. These young parents often face greater economic challenges, because half of them live in low-income households. To advance their career prospects and improve their family’s economic security, many young parents work while also pursuing education. But balancing all those responsibilities is challenging, and parents may need additional support to succeed.

Below are key facts for understanding young parents balancing work and education as well as recommendations for how policymakers and education programs can support them.

## YOUNG PARENTS SPEND A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME COMBINING WORK AND EDUCATION

Most young parents have combined work and education at some point. Through age 30, the largest share of young parents’ time was spent only working, while the smallest share was spent only in education. Young parents spent an average of 9 percent of their time combining work and education, and that share stayed relatively constant between ages 23 and 30. Young parents spent an average of 26 percent of their time disconnected from work and education.

### Young Parents’ Share of Time Spent in Work and Education in Each Year, from the Birth of Their First Child Through Age 30



Source: Nathan Sick, Carolyn Vilter, and Shayne Spaulding, *Young Parents Making Their Way* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2019).

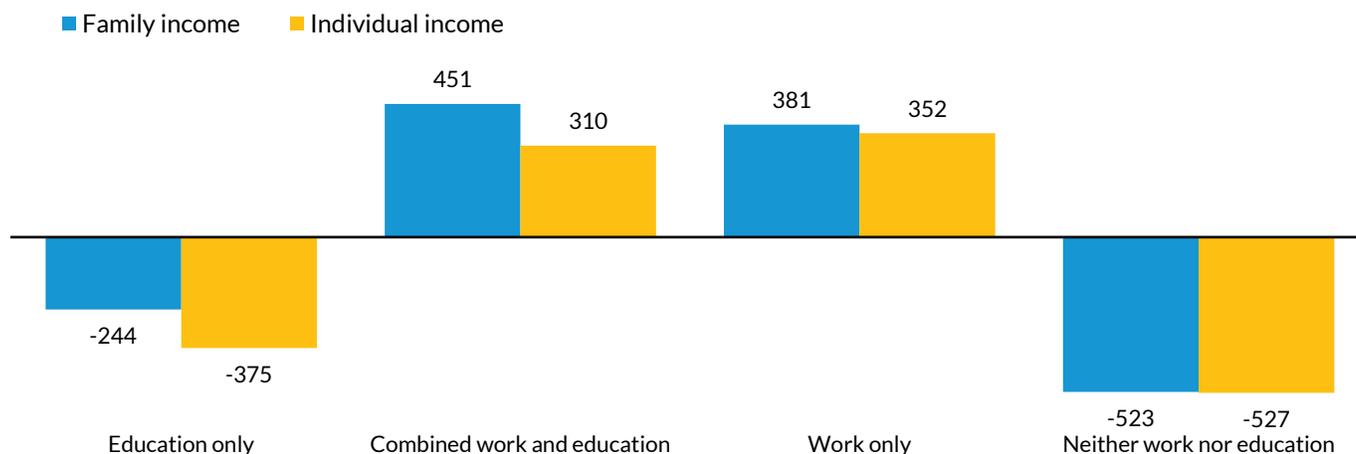
Notes: N ranges from 1,604 to 2,912. Data are included only for years when an individual had his or her first child through age 30. Education includes time in both education activities and in workforce training.

## COMBINING EDUCATION AND WORK CAN BENEFIT PARENTS' INCOMES LATER IN LIFE

For young parents, each percentage point of time spent combining work and education is associated with several hundred dollars in higher earnings at age 30. These associations are even larger for some groups of young parents.

### Differences in Income at Age 30 Associated with Share of Time Spent in Education or Work

Change in dollars of annual income



Source: Nathan Sick, Carolyn Vilter, and Shayne Spaulding, *Young Parents Making Their Way* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2019).

Notes: N ranges from 2,437 to 2,589. All values are statistically significant except for education-only family income.

## YOUNG PARENTS JUGGLING WORK AND EDUCATION HAVE COMPLEX CHILD CARE NEEDS

- Young parents average 46.5 hours a week in work or education activities combined. This is significantly higher than the work hours of young parents who only work (42.1 hours on average).
- Of children in these families, 90 percent have a parent in work or education outside standard work hours.
- For these families, the typical share of household income spent on child care for those paying is 14 percent—twice what the federal government recommends child care cost a household.
- These families often have low incomes and face other disadvantages that can hinder their success.
- The children of young working parents in education are more likely to be in nonparental care, especially the care of unpaid relatives, for more hours than children whose parents only work.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE?

### Education programs can

- seek to reengage young parents who are disconnected from work and education;
- structure programs to accommodate the complex schedules of parents who work and pursue education;
- assess young parents' child care needs and help them find and pay for child care;
- provide supports that reduce parents' financial burdens, including tuition and transportation assistance;
- provide counseling and guidance to navigate education programs, parenting, and personal issues; and
- continuously support parents as they navigate this balancing act through their twenties and beyond.

### Policymakers can

- expand visibility of and access to financial assistance for parents balancing work and education, such as for child care subsidies that can alleviate financial and time pressures that disrupt parents' education;
- support relative caregivers' child development and safety knowledge through strategies like home visiting; and
- cover the cost of care for more parents and during time parents spend in work and education.

This fact sheet draws from the Urban Institute reports *Balancing Work with School and Training While Raising Young Children* and *Young Parents Making Their Way*. Find the reports at <https://urbn.is/2nj6BeN> and <https://urbn.is/2mIAC7q>.

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