

NOVEMBER 2021

Understanding the Needs of Adult Learners in Chicago: A Data Profile

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In 2020, the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) began working with the Urban Institute to develop a comprehensive picture of adult learners in Chicago and to investigate various opportunities and gaps that exist in the city for distinct subpopulations of adult learners. CCC is the largest community college system in Illinois, with 4,000 faculty and staff serving 68,000 students annually at seven colleges and five satellite sites. The system strives to serve as a critical avenue for upward economic mobility. CCC engaged in this work after internal data analysis indicated that the system could do a better job of attracting and serving adult learners.¹

Through the development of this profile of adult learners in Chicago and subsequent interviews with key stakeholders in Chicago's adult-learner ecosystem, the Urban Institute provided information to CCC leadership to help inform their strategy for attracting and serving adult learners moving forward.² By releasing this data profile publicly, we aim to inform other Chicago-based organizations in their efforts to serve adult learners, as well as to provide other communities outside of Chicago a framework for understanding their adult learner population.

This data profile provides a picture of adult learners in Chicago by identifying and describing key subgroups of learners. First, we review available literature to define adult learners and key subgroups. We then present a picture of adult learners in Chicago using data from the American Community Survey, or ACS.³ Additional information is drawn from available literature and websites.

What Do We Mean by Adult Learners?

Broadly, adult learners are categorized as anyone whose "age, social roles, or self-perception, define them as adults" (Merriam and Brockett 2007, 8). Many studies focused on adult learners use a threshold of age 25 or older. Notably, 40 percent of undergraduates today are between ages 25 and 34, and enrollment for this cohort increased 43 percent between 2000 and 2016 (Prins, Kassab, and Campbell 2015).⁴ Age 25 is a common threshold demarcating adult learners from younger students in part because of data aggregation and eligibility for federal financial aid programs, but some scholars have pointed out that using age alone to define adult learners is insufficient and potentially problematic (Ho and Lim 2020; Marcus et al 2016).

Individuals are also characterized as adult learners based on their circumstances and characteristics, such as having dependents, being employed full time, being financially independent, and serving in the military (Choy 2002; Kazis et al. 2007). These categories are discussed in the literature, but they are also used in practical ways as eligibility criteria for federal programs. Under federal financial aid guidelines, for example, those under age 24 may qualify for independent status if they are married, have dependents of their own, are military veterans, or are orphans or wards of the court (Wei et al. 2005).

Who Are Adult Learners in Chicago?

Understanding how individuals age 25 and older differ from younger postsecondary students can help identify their unique needs and can reveal key subpopulations to target for programs and services.

Individuals age 25 and older made up two-thirds of Chicago's population in 2018. As is visible in table 1, these residents are not different than younger residents along key characteristics, such as race, ethnicity and gender, although Latinx residents do constitute a larger share of younger group (28 percent for individuals ages 18 to 24 compared with 25 percent of those age 25 and older).

TABLE 1
Key Characteristics of Chicago Residents Age 25 and older

	Percent	Number
Race and ethnicity		
White	37%	663,756
Black or African American	29%	533,899
Latinx	25%	462,798
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	7%	126,698
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%	2,830
Multiracial	1%	24,828
Other	0.2%	3,643
Gender		
Male	48%	872,330
Female	52%	946,122
Educational attainment		
Less than a high school degree	16%	283,918
High school diploma or GED	23%	417,970
Some college, no degree	18%	319,363
Associate's degree	6%	102,043
Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree	38%	695,158
Employment status		
Currently working part time (less than 35 hours a week)	10%	185,879
Currently working full time (35+ hours a week)	53%	968,319
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the last 12 months	33%	586,828
Individual income		
< \$25K	54%	980,050
\$25-\$55K	22%	399,456
\$55-\$100K	15%	274,889
> \$100K	9%	164,057
Household income level		
< 200% of the federal poverty level	35%	639,346
Foreign born		
Foreign born	27%	497,188
Own children present if respondent is household head or partner		
Any own children of household head or partner	21%	380,820
Any own children age 6 and under of household head or partner	11%	195,250
Any own children ages 7 to 17 of household head or partner	15%	268,653
Military status		
Currently serving	1%	13,313
Active duty in the past	4%	68,062

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014–18.

Notes: "Native American" refers to people who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native. "Latinx" refers to those who identify as Hispanic and can be in combination with any other race. For part-time and full-time workers, the American Community Survey requests respondents to report the "usual hours worked" on their job.

Predictably, patterns of educational attainment vary more widely. Older students have had more time to earn postsecondary and graduate credentials yielding higher rates of educational attainment. At the same time, younger students show higher rates of high school completion, matching national trends in increased graduation rates and reduced dropout rates in secondary school (MacFarland et al. 2020).

Older adults are more likely to work full time (53 percent for Chicago residents age 25 and older compared to 28 percent ages 18 to 24), and less likely to work part time (10 percent compared with 24 percent). Patterns of unemployment are similar: 35 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds reported not working in at least a year compared with 37 percent of those age 25 and up. Older adults have higher earnings and are less likely to be poor.

Who Are Key Subgroups of Adult Learners?

Beyond the fact that the older and younger groups are similar in many respects, targeting all adults age 25 and older is not likely a viable or useful strategy, because this large population has a wide range of needs, reasons they might pursue education or training, and barriers that may impede further education or training. Thinking about key subpopulations within this broader group can be useful for thinking about how to target services. In this section, we focus on understanding the characteristics and circumstances of key groups of learners.

Adults Without a High School Credential or Foundational Skills

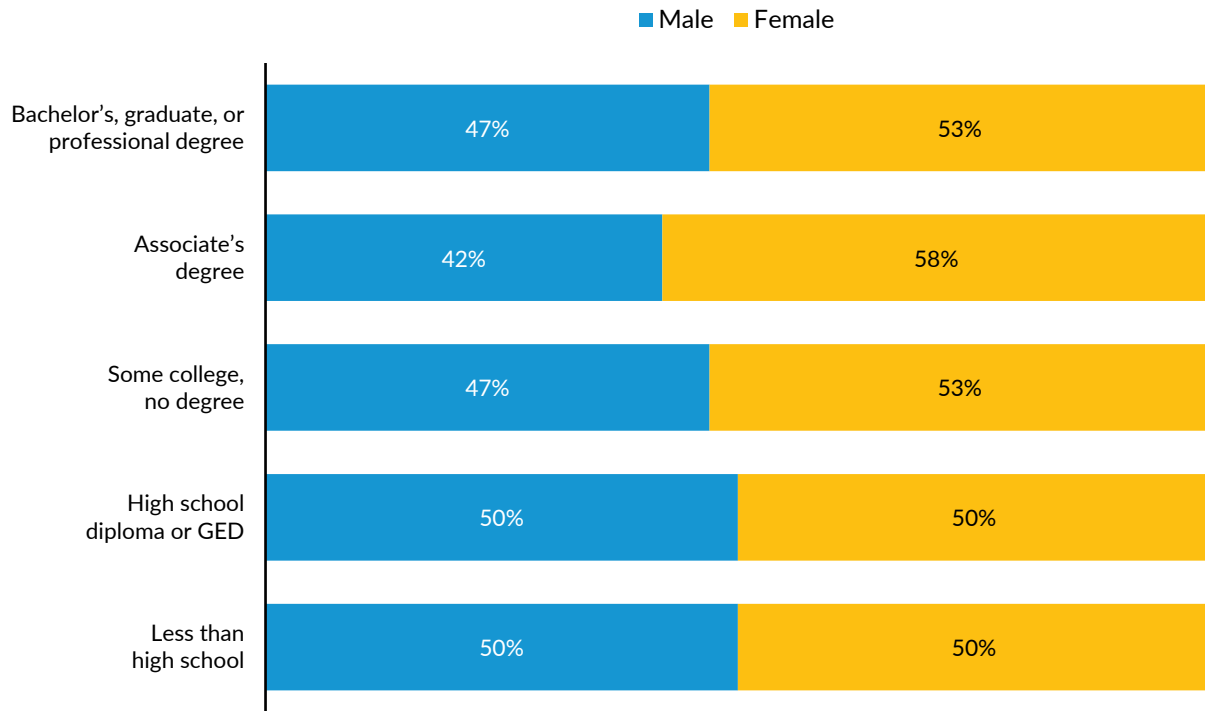
Among residents age 25 and older, 16 percent lack a high school credential. Within this subpopulation, 54 percent identify as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino, and 29 percent identify as Black (table A.2). Only 11 percent of this subpopulation is white. Over half of this subpopulation has income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (62 percent), and only 38 percent reported being employed. The lack of a high school credential can create a barrier to accessing certain jobs and education programs, and research has found that earning a GED credential can increase enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education for adult basic education students (Heller and Mumma 2019). A related issue is the lack of foundational skills for some adults; data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies survey indicates that adult Chicagoans have lower levels of numeracy and literacy than adults in Illinois as a whole.⁵

Adults With Some College and No Degree

Approximately 18 percent of Chicagoans age 25 and older fall into this category (table A.2). Overall, 45 percent of adults with some college education but no degree in Chicago are Black, 28 percent are white, and 22 percent identify as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino (figure 2).⁶ Notably, over a third have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and just under half reported being employed full time (table A.2). A higher share of women have completed some college (as well as degree attainment) than men, reflecting national trends in educational attainment by gender (figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Educational Attainment by Gender, Adults Over 25 in Chicago, 2018

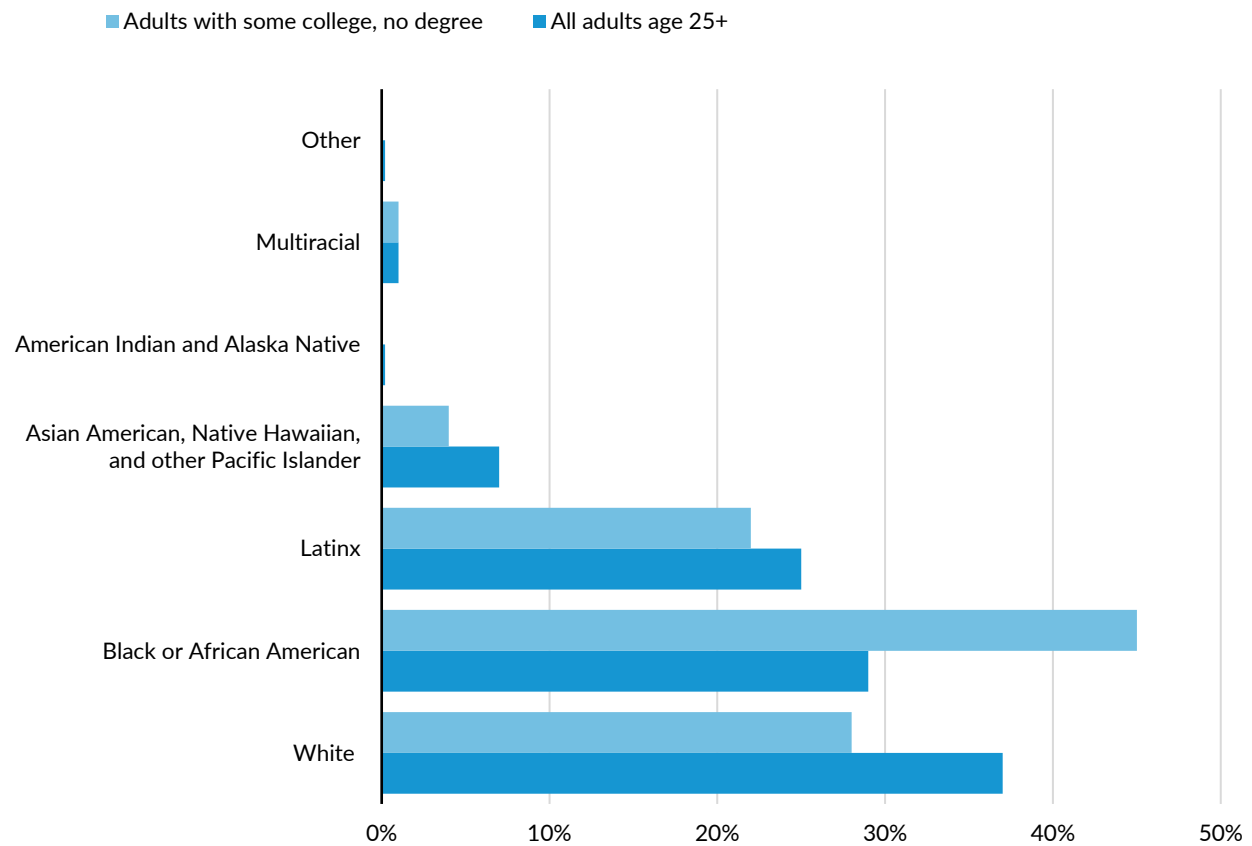


Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014–18.

For those students who have not completed a college degree but have accumulated some college credit, there may be an opportunity to return to college to earn a college degree or credential that has currency in the labor market. Colleges across the country are focusing on how to bring students back in who started on the path to a degree but did not complete it (Eyster and Gebrekristos 2018). In Chicago, Black students constitute a disproportionate percentage of this group (figure 2). In May 2021, the Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education released an action plan for the recruitment and retention of Black students in higher education in Illinois, finding that Black students were “significantly less likely than their white peers” to stay in school long enough to earn a degree (Chicago State University Equity Working Group 2021).

FIGURE 2

Race and Ethnicity, Chicago Residents with Some College and No Degree and All Residents 25 and Older, 2018



Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014–18.

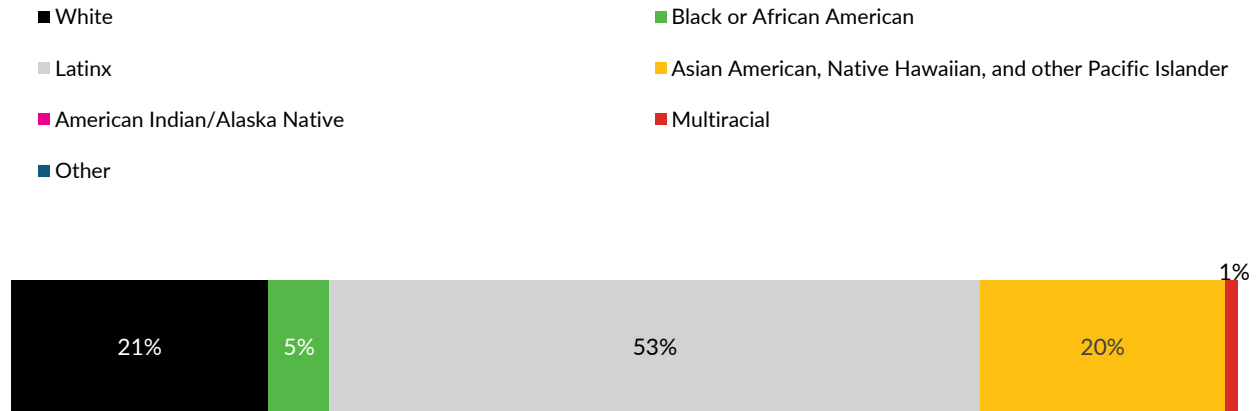
Adults Who Are Foreign Born

Approximately 27 percent of adult Chicagoans age 25 and older are foreign born (table A.1). Like all subgroups discussed in the section, foreign-born students are not a monolithic group and can have a variety of education, training, and workforce service needs (Bernstein and Vilter 2018). As shown in figure 3, approximately a third have a bachelor's degree or higher, and more than half have no college credit at all, holding either a high school credential or no high school degree. Only 11 percent have some college education but no degree. The educational needs of these adults could include the same services required by other adult learners as well as English language instruction, high school equivalency programs, citizenship and immigrant integration support, and recredentialing for individuals with credentials awarded abroad, for jobs in either the same or similar occupations.

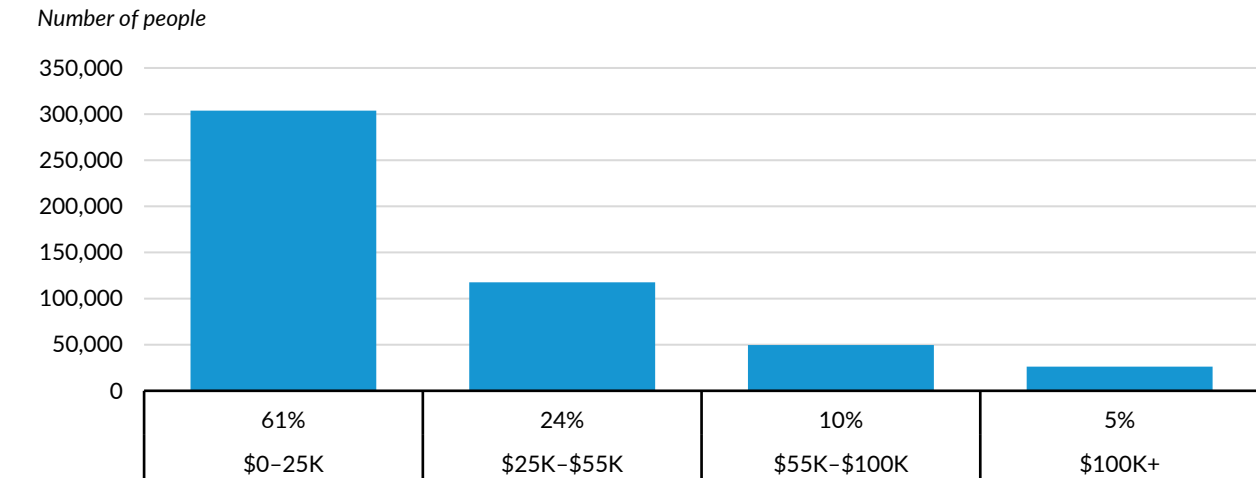
FIGURE 3

Key Characteristics of Foreign-Born Adults in Chicago Ages 25 and Older, 2018

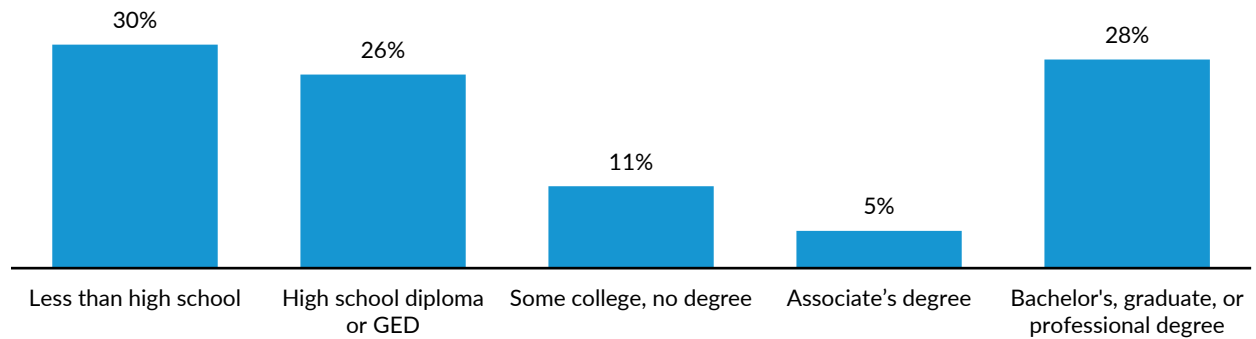
Race and ethnicity



Income



Educational attainment



Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014-18.

Adults with Children

A key population of adult learners are students age 25 and older who are parents themselves (table 2). Student parents face unique challenges participating in education and training, especially when their children are young, because of issues related to the cost and availability of child care and the difficulty of managing a complex schedule that often involves working full time while attending school (Spaulding, Derrick-Mills, and Callan 2016). When looking at mothers, we find that over a quarter have not worked in at least a year (29 percent), and 16 percent worked part time for at least a part of the year. Notably, nearly 1 in 2 mothers (47 percent) have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, indicating a likely need for basic income and day-to-day supports.⁷

TABLE 2

Women Age 25 and Older with Children Age 17 or under, Chicago 2018

Race and ethnicity	Percent	Number
White	27%	57,957
Black or African American	28%	59,934
Latinx	36%	77,987
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	7%	15,049
American Indian and Alaska Native	0%	312
Multiracial	1%	3,120
Other	0%	365
Marital status		
Married	63%	134,835
Widowed	1%	2,483
Divorced	6%	13,603
Separated	3%	6,909
Never married	27%	56,894
Educational attainment		
Less than a high school degree	15%	31,699
High school diploma or GED	22%	47,990
Some college, no degree	19%	41,821
Associate's degree	7%	14,472
Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree	37%	78,742
Employment status		
Currently working part time (less than 35 hours a week)	16%	34,340
Currently working full time (35+ hours a week)	50%	108,213
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	29%	61,793
Individual income		
< \$25K	57%	122,782
\$25K-\$55K	21%	45,593
\$55K-100K	14%	29,976
> \$100K	8%	16,373
Household income level		
< 200% of the federal poverty level	47%	101,575

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014-18.

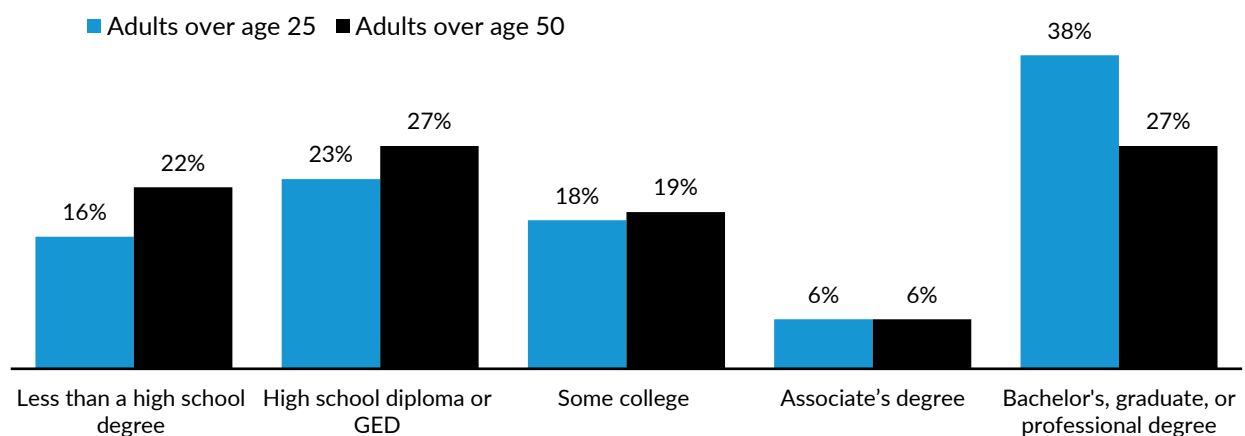
Note: Those listed as employed part time could have been employed full time for only a portion of the year, as the survey question asks respondents to average their number of hours worked in the past 12 months. In the individual data, only women are asked about their parental status. Data are the percent and number who are mothers out of female respondents (7844) to the survey.

Older Workers

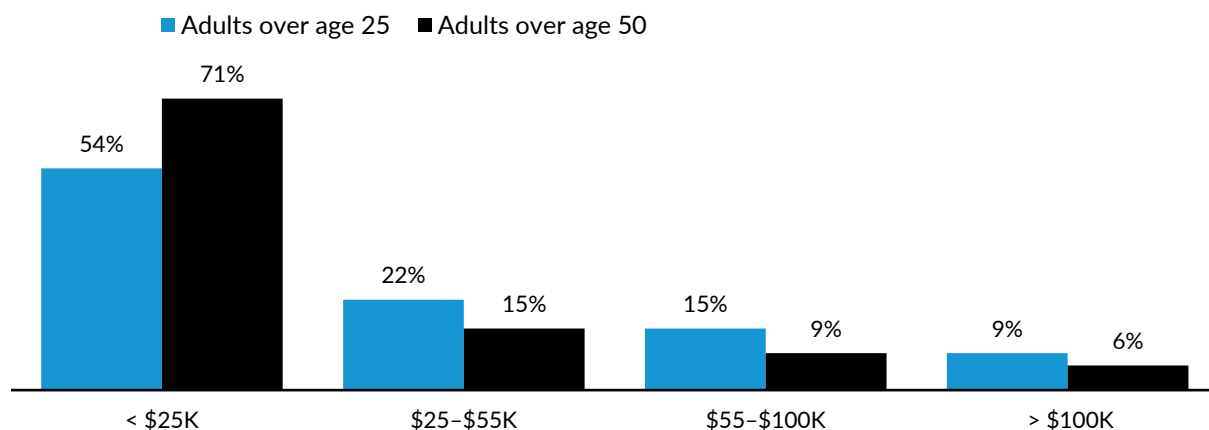
Another important subpopulation of adult learners is older workers, defined here as those age 50 and older. More than a third of Chicago residents are age 50 and older (42 percent); 34 percent of these adults reported working full time and 71 percent make less than \$25,000 (figure 4; table A.3). Anticipated changes to the labor market and the future of work point to the need for workers at all levels to reskill, particularly to improve digital skills (Hecker, Spaulding, and Kuehn 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these changes and increased automation and the prevalence of remote work. Mikelson, Kuehn, and Martin-Caughey (2017) examine potential skill gaps among the older workforce based on projected occupational demand and required skills; they find larger gaps for those age 50 and older than for the population. Research has also found that older workers with more digital skills have significantly higher earnings than those with less, pointing to the benefits of prioritizing digital skills training for older workers (Hecker, Spaulding, and Kuehn 2021).

FIGURE 4
Distinctions between Adults Over 25 and Adults Over 50 in Chicago, 2018

Educational attainment



Income



Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey one-year estimate, 2018.

Veterans and Adults Serving in The Military

Adults exiting the military may warrant focus to ensure that the skills and competencies they gained while in service can translate into college credits or other credentials. In some cases, institutional inflexibilities around prior learning assessments can create barriers (Kazis et al. 2007). Further, active-duty personnel are primarily served by remote and online learning platforms; if these platforms are unavailable to them, access to postsecondary education will also be largely unavailable (Moon and Schma 2011). Five percent of Chicagoans age 25 and older and 0.4 percent of Chicagoans ages 18 to 24 are veterans or actively serving in the military.

TABLE 3
Adults Over 18 with Some Past or Current Military Status, Chicago 2018

Race and ethnicity	Percent	Number
White	40%	33,352
Black or African American	44%	36,338
Latinx	12%	9,611
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	2%	1,694
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	212
Multiracial	2%	1,560
Other	0.3%	221
Gender		
Male	91%	75,386
Female	9%	7,602
Educational attainment		
Less than a high school degree	9%	7,078
High school diploma or GED	25%	20,571
Some college	28%	23,555
Associate's degree	8%	6,579
Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree	30%	25,205
Household income level		
< 200% of the federal poverty level	31%	25,977
Employment status		
Currently working part time (less than 35 hours a week)	8%	6,594
Currently working full time (35+ hours a week)	35%	28,937
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	52%	45,098

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey one-year estimate, 2018.

Note: Those listed as employed part time could have been employed full time for only a portion of the year, as the survey question asks respondents to average their number of hours worked in the past 12 months.

Individuals Ages 18 to 24 Serving in Adult Roles

As noted, adult learners are defined by the extent to which they are filling adult roles. In the literature, being a parent, being married, serving in the military, working full time, and being financially independent are key circumstances that can lead to someone being considered an adult learner regardless of age. For example, an 18-year-old parent would be considered an adult learner. Categories of note for 18- to 24-year-olds are shown in table 4.

TABLE 4

Key Characteristics of 18- to 24-Year-Olds, Chicago 2018

Employment status	Percent	Number
Currently working part time (less than 35 hours a week)	24%	66,656
Currently working full time (35+ hours a week)	28%	77,732
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	35%	95,021
Marital status		
Married	4%	11,793
Widowed	0.1%	140
Divorced	0.2%	473
Separated	0.2%	608
Never married	95%	260,863
Military status		
Currently serving	0.40%	1,103
Active duty in past	0.20%	510
Own children present if respondent is household head or partner		
Any own children of household head or partner	3%	9,571
Any own children 0 to 6 of household head or partner	3%	9,082
Any own children 7 to 17 of household head or partner	0.4%	1,152

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey one-year estimate, 2018.

Note: Those listed as employed part time could have been employed full time for only a portion of the year, as the survey question asks respondents to average their number of hours worked in the past 12 months. In the individual data, only women are asked about their parental status. Data are the percent and number who are mothers out of female respondents in this age group.

Parents under age 25 face particular challenges as they enter adulthood, start their working lives, and navigate parenting at the same time. These difficulties can be compounded by the fact that young parents are more likely to earn low incomes (Sandstrom et al 2019; Sick, Vilter, and Spaulding 2019). Twenty-eight percent of 18- to 24-year-olds in Chicago are working full time, potentially altering their availability for classes and prolonging their time to complete a credential. However, these early work experiences also yield benefits (Edelman and Holzer 2013). As noted, 0.4 percent of Chicagoans ages 18 to 24 are veterans or active service members and would potentially require remote learning options as well as credit or credit mapping for skills learned in the military.

Adults In Low-Wage or At-Risk Sectors

Another way to understand the needs of adult learners is to understand more about where they work. In table 5, we use data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics to look at patterns of employment and wages by occupational categories for all workers. Because our definition of adult learners includes anyone working full or part time, the table below includes workers of all ages. In May 2020 in Chicago, more than half of the city's workforce was employed in an occupation with a mean hourly wage of less than \$25. Many low-wage service-sector jobs have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the accommodation and food service sectors seeing many layoffs in the early stages of the pandemic but now facing both challenges in finding workers and pressure to improve job quality and working conditions.⁸ In the Chicago metropolitan area, food preparation and service occupations employed 7 percent of the workforce in May 2020 and had mean wages of \$12.83—the lowest of any occupation. Notably, the mean wage for food preparation and service was 4 percent less in Chicago than the national mean, though across all occupations, the mean hourly wage in Chicago was 7 percent higher than the national mean.⁹

TABLE 5

Occupational Employment and Wages by Major Occupational Group, Chicago Metropolitan Area, May 2020

Occupation	Percent of total employment	Mean hourly wage
Food preparation and serving related	7%	\$12.83
Personal care and service	2%	\$15.80
Healthcare support	4%	\$15.97
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3%	\$16.44
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0%	\$16.93
Production	7%	\$20.22
Transportation and material moving	10%	\$20.54
Office and administrative support	14%	\$21.44
Sales and related	9%	\$23.42
Community and social service	1%	\$25.80
Installation, maintenance, and repair	4%	\$26.96
Protective service	2%	\$27.64
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1%	\$29.12
Educational instruction and library	6%	\$29.15
Construction and extraction	3%	\$35.68
Life, physical, and social science	1%	\$37.98
Business and financial operations	7%	\$39.53
Healthcare practitioners and technical	6%	\$41.37
Architecture and engineering	1%	\$41.75
Computer and mathematical	3%	\$45.39
Legal	1%	\$60.20
Management	8%	\$63.37

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2021.

Notes: The hourly wages highlighted in red reflect the occupations where the mean hourly wage is less than \$25.00.

Occupational and industry data can indicate key low-wage sectors where adult learners work, and these adults may be able to benefit from earning credentials to either move up within their industry or to move to a sector with higher-paying occupations. In some cases, these data can also indicate low-wage sectors that are at greater risk of automation.¹⁰ By occupation, the five lowest-paying occupational groups in the Chicago metropolitan area account for 16 percent of the labor force. None of these occupations—food preparation and service, personal care and service, health care support, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, and farming, fishing, and forestry—had a mean wage of more than \$17 in May 2020.

These trends have led some employers in Chicago and across the US to increase wages and benefits like signing bonuses; they have also led to a focus on job quality in federal, state, and local economic and workforce development initiatives.¹¹ The City of Chicago also raised its minimum wage to \$15 an hour in July 2021.¹² Understanding the dynamics of low-wage sectors and work can be helpful in thinking about recruitment of adult learners and design of programs to meet the needs of those who work while going to school.

Conclusion

Adult learners are not a monolithic group that can be defined only by age. Understanding the subpopulations of adult learners can be useful in considering how to target education and training programs that help prepare workers for jobs and are aimed at increasing economic mobility. This brief provides an initial set of insights for informing CCC as well as other Chicago-based organizations and stakeholders in efforts to expand and improve programming for adult learners. These data and the potential implications for programming offered can be starting places for collaboration for those focused on improving recruitment and retention of adult learners in postsecondary environments in Chicago. The methods used in this brief can also be easily adopted by other jurisdictions seeking to gain a fuller understanding of their adult learner populations.

Appendix

TABLE A.1

Foreign Born Adults Ages 25 and Older, Chicago 2018

Race and ethnicity	Percent	Number
White	21%	105,402
Black or African American	5%	23,405
Latinx	53%	261,228
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	20%	99,942
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	335
Multiracial	1%	5,370
Other	0%	1,506
Gender		
Male	50%	249,909
Female	50%	247,279
Marital status		
Married	58%	290,727
Widowed	6%	30,407
Divorced	8%	37,667
Separated	3%	15,722
Never married	25%	122,665
Educational attainment		
Less than high school	30%	151,281
High school diploma or GED	26%	129,991
Some college, no degree	11%	55,538
Associate's degree	5%	23,227
Bachelor's or higher	28%	137,151
Employment status		
Currently working part time (less than 35 hours a week)	10%	52,053
Currently working full time (35+ hours a week)	53%	262,413
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	33%	163,581
Individual income		
< \$25K	61%	303,682
\$25K-\$55K	24%	117,629
\$55K-\$100K	10%	49,621
\$100k+	5%	26,256
Household income level		
< 200% of the federal poverty level	42%	210,583

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014-18.

Note: Those listed as employed part time could have been employed full time for only a portion of the year, as the survey question asks respondents to average their number of hours worked in the past 12 months.

TABLE A.2

Educational Attainment of Adults over Age 25, Chicago 2018

	Less than high school (283,918)		High school diploma or GED (417,970)		Some college no degree (319,363)		Associate's degree (102,043)		Bachelor's degree or above (695,158)	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Race and ethnicity										
White	11%	29,943	26%	94,071	28%	88,232	29%	29,087	61%	421,703
Black/African American	29%	80,934	37%	158,364	45%	143,773	38%	39,138	16%	111,690
Latinx	54%	154,008	35%	144,189	22%	69,367	25%	25,314	10%	69,920
AANHPI	6%	16,253	4%	16,956	4%	12,223	5%	5,606	11%	75,660
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	421	0%	532	0%	653	0%	108	0%	1,116
Multiracial	1%	1,757	1%	3,251	1%	4,315	2%	1,794	2%	13,711
Other	0%	602	0%	607	0%	800	0%	276	0%	1,358
Gender										
Male	50%	141,287	50%	210,508	47%	150,533	42%	43,281	47%	326,721
Female	50%	142,631	50%	207,462	53%	168,830	58%	58,762	53%	368,437
Marital status										
Married	43%	122,872	39%	162,985	35%	110,526	39%	40,036	44%	307,919
Widowed	12%	35,136	9%	35,828	6%	19,056	6%	5,802	2%	16,332
Divorced	9%	25,357	10%	41,837	13%	41,795	13%	13,329	8%	58,088
Separated	4%	12,677	3%	12,897	3%	10,638	4%	3,633	1%	9,776
Never married	31%	87,876	39%	164,423	43%	137,348	38%	39,243	44%	303,043
Employment status										
Currently working part time (< 35 hours a week)	8%	23,009	10%	42,308	13%	42,850	13%	13,113	9%	64,599
Currently working full time (> 35 hours a week)	30%	87,287	42%	173,707	49%	155,937	56%	57,346	71%	494,042
Jobless duration										
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	58%	163,410	44%	184,910	34%	103,561	25%	25,932	16%	109,015
Individual income										
< \$25K	81%	231,111	71%	296,345	59%	189,028	50%	50,527	31%	213,039
\$25K-\$55K	15%	42,579	22%	90,886	26%	83,550	30%	30,593	22%	151,848
\$55L-100K	3%	8,850	6%	25,580	11%	36,144	16%	16,433	27%	187,882
> \$100K	0.5%	1,378	1%	5,159	3%	10,641	4%	4,490	20%	142,389
Household income level										
< 200% of FPL	62%	175,443	49%	205,411	39%	125,293	31%	31,733	15%	101,466

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2014-18.

Notes: AANHPI = Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander; FPL = the federal poverty level. For part-time and full-time workers, the American Community Survey requests respondents to report the "usual hours worked" on their job.

TABLE A.3

Characteristics of Adults over Age 50, Chicago 2018

Race	Percent	Number
White	35%	267,662
Black or African American	36%	273,587
Latinx	22%	164,577
AANHPI	6%	44,725
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%	1,306
Multiracial	1%	6,517
Other	0.2%	1,247
Gender		
Male	46%	345,916
Female	54%	413,705
Marital status		
Married	44%	337,753
Widowed	14%	107,226
Divorced	16%	120,551
Separated	4%	27,776
Never married	22%	166,315
Education		
Less than high school	22%	167,020
High school diploma or GED	27%	204,509
Some college, no degree	19%	140,560
Associate's degree	6%	43,203
Bachelor's degree or higher	27%	204,329
Employment		
Part time (less than 35 hours a week)	9%	65,873
Full time (35+ hours a week)	34%	255,022
Jobless duration		
Not working, not worked in the past 12 months	54%	411,737
Individual income		
< \$25K	71%	536,397
\$25k-\$55K	15%	110,157
\$55k-\$100K	9%	66,222
> \$100K	6%	46,845
Household income level		
Below 200% of FPL	33%	279,274

Source: Authors' calculations using the American Community Survey one-year estimate, 2018.

Notes: Those listed as employed part time could have been employed full time for only a portion of the year, as the survey question asks respondents to average their number of hours worked in the last 12 months.

Notes

- ¹ City Colleges of Chicago Website: <https://www.ccc.edu/pages/DistrictAbout.aspx>.
- ² Though interviews were conducted as part of this work, this brief only reflects the findings from a landscape review of publicly available data and does not reflect the findings of those interviews.
- ³ Five-year American Community Survey sample from 2014 to 2018 collected from IPUMS.
- ⁴ "Better Service for Your Adult Learners, Better Enrollment, Persistence, and Completion for Your Institution," Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2020, https://www.cael.org/hubfs/033-19%20CAEL%20AL360%20Flyer_NB.pdf.
- ⁵ Authors used the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies' skills map comparison tool for Chicago to examine skill levels relative to the state average for Illinois. See "U.S. Skills Map: State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy," PIAAC, accessed November 2, 2021, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>.

- ⁶ When referring to the Census data ethnic categories, we use Spanish/Hispanic/Latino because it represents the choices for Latinx ethnicities on the American Community Survey.
- ⁷ These data are from 2018, and the authors note that stimulus packages such as the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan have since provided specific income supports for people with children.
- ⁸ See Graham MacDonald, Christopher Davis, Ajjit Narayanan, Vivian Sihan Zheng, and Yipeng Su, “Where Low-Income Jobs Are Being Lost to COVID-19,” Urban Institute, last updated August 6, 2021, <https://www.urban.org/features/where-low-income-jobs-are-being-lost-covid-19>
- ⁹ “Table A. Occupational Employment and Wages by Major Occupational Group, United States and the Chicago Metropolitan Area, and Measures of Statistical Significance, May 2020,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Midwest Information Office, accessed October 14, 2021, https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_chicago.htm.
- ¹⁰ Marcus Casey and Sarah Nzau, “Searching for Clarity: How Much Will Automation Impact the Middle Class?” *Up Front* (Brookings Institution blog), July 18, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/07/18/how-much-will-automation-impact-the-middle-class-we-dont-know-yet/>.
- ¹¹ Abdel Jimenez, “Is \$300 Enough to Say Yes to That Job? Some Chicago Companies Offer Hiring Bonuses for the First Time amid Labor Shortage,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 2021. As part of the American Rescue Plan, the US Economic Development Administration is hosting the Good Jobs Challenge. Through the challenge, EDA is allocating \$500 million to collaborative skills training systems and programs. The program is accepting applicants through January 2022.
- ¹² Leah Hope, “Chicago Minimum Wage Increase to \$15-an-hour Takes Effect.” *ABC 7 Chicago*, July 2, 2021.

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Acknowledgments

This report was funded by the Lumina Foundation through a research partnership with City Colleges of Chicago. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples.

The authors would also like to thank Daniel Kuehn for his thoughtful review of this data profile and Christian Collins, former Urban Institute colleague, for his early contributions to data analysis. We are also grateful to our colleagues at City Colleges of Chicago—Stacia Edwards, Robert Sitko, Jennifer Mason, Maureen Fitzpatrick, and Mark Potter—for their feedback and insights.



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