

The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2021 Estimates as of June 28, 2022 - No. 29

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2021 data²

Numbers at a Glance

| Fiscal Year | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY | 436,556 | 437,337 | 426,325 | 407,318 | 391,098 |
| Number entered foster care during the FY | 270,197 | 263,776 | 252,414 | 216,842 | 206,812 |
| Number exited foster care during the FY | 248,882 | 252,209 | 249,936 | 224,425 | 214,971 |
| Number served by the foster care system during the FY | 685,403 | 689,505 | 676,188 | 631,686 | 606,031 |
| Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY | 124,004 | 126,546 | 123,823 | 117,446 | 113,589 |
| Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated as of the last day of the FY | 69,921 | 71,990 | 71,887 | 63,836 | 64,985 |
| Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY | 59,491 | 63,094 | 66,208 | 57,881 | 54,240 |

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2021 - N=391,098

| Age as of September 30th | Years | Sex | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|
| Mean | 8.0 | Male | 51% | 199,969 |
| Median | 7.0 | Female | 49% | 191,037 |

| Age as of September 30th | Percent | Number | Most Recent Placement Setting | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|--|----------------|---------------|
| Less than 1 Year | 7% | 28,704 | Pre-Adoptive Home | 4% | 16,381 |
| 1 Year | 9% | 33,374 | Foster Family Home (Relative) | 35% | 133,873 |
| 2 Years | 8% | 29,871 | Foster Family Home (Non-Relative) | 44% | 171,627 |
| 3 Years | 7% | 25,737 | Group Home | 4% | 15,432 |
| 4 Years | 6% | 23,318 | Institution | 5% | 19,929 |
| 5 Years | 5% | 20,677 | Supervised Independent Living | 2% | 8,633 |
| 6 Years | 5% | 19,667 | Runaway | 1% | 4,240 |
| 7 Years | 5% | 18,319 | Trial Home Visit | 4% | 17,439 |
| 8 Years | 4% | 17,300 | | | |
| 9 Years | 4% | 16,276 | Case Plan Goal | Percent | Number |
| 10 Years | 4% | 15,630 | Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s) | 53% | 201,297 |
| 11 Years | 4% | 15,485 | Live with Other Relative(s) | 3% | 13,258 |
| 12 Years | 4% | 16,180 | Adoption | 28% | 105,681 |
| 13 Years | 4% | 17,378 | Long Term Foster Care | 2% | 7,046 |
| 14 Years | 5% | 18,073 | Emancipation | 5% | 17,759 |
| 15 Years | 5% | 19,471 | Guardianship | 4% | 15,797 |
| 16 Years | 5% | 20,267 | Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established | 6% | 21,053 |
| 17 Years | 5% | 20,661 | | | |
| 18 Years | 2% | 6,335 | | | |
| 19 Years | 1% | 4,227 | | | |
| 20 Years | 1% | 3,818 | | | |

¹ 'FY' refers to the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1st through September 30th.

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by June 28, 2022 are included in this report. Missing data are excluded from each table. Therefore, the totals within each distribution may not equal the total provided for that subpopulation (e.g. number in care on September 30th may not match the sum across ages for that group). Note: Due to data quality concerns, many of which are associated with the lingering effects of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's data are only included for the years 2018 through 2021 for both foster care and adoption. PR is in the process of addressing the quality of their data.

| Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number | Time in Care | Months |
|--|---------|---------|--------------|--------|
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 2% | 9,393 | Mean | 21.7 |
| Asian | 1% | 2,025 | Median | 14.9 |
| Black or African American | 22% | 86,645 | | |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0% | 987 | | |
| Hispanic (of any race) | 22% | 85,215 | | |
| White | 43% | 168,063 | | |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine | 2% | 7,144 | | |
| Two or More Races | 8% | 30,701 | | |

| Time in Care | Percent | Number |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month | 4% | 17,322 |
| 1 - 5 Months | 19% | 74,976 |
| 6 - 11 Months | 19% | 73,046 |
| 12 - 17 Months | 14% | 52,956 |
| 18 - 23 Months | 12% | 45,310 |
| 24 - 29 Months | 9% | 35,287 |
| 30 - 35 Months | 6% | 23,296 |
| 3 - 4 Years | 12% | 45,410 |
| 5 Years or More | 6% | 23,493 |

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2021 - N=206,812

| Age at Entry | Years | Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number |
|--------------|-------|--|---------|--------|
| Mean | 6.7 | American Indian/Alaska Native | 2% | 4,622 |
| Median | 6.0 | Asian | 1% | 1,177 |
| | | Black or African American | 20% | 40,902 |
| | | Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0% | 605 |
| | | Hispanic (of any race) | 21% | 43,293 |
| | | White | 46% | 93,973 |
| | | Unknown/Unable to Determine | 3% | 5,583 |
| | | Two or More Races | 8% | 15,833 |

| Age at Entry | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 21% | 42,524 |
| 1 Year | 7% | 14,491 |
| 2 Years | 6% | 12,807 |
| 3 Years | 6% | 11,820 |
| 4 Years | 5% | 10,884 |
| 5 Years | 5% | 10,021 |
| 6 Years | 5% | 9,557 |
| 7 Years | 4% | 8,847 |
| 8 Years | 4% | 8,281 |
| 9 Years | 4% | 7,727 |
| 10 Years | 4% | 7,342 |
| 11 Years | 4% | 7,730 |
| 12 Years | 4% | 7,966 |
| 13 Years | 4% | 8,957 |
| 14 Years | 5% | 9,483 |
| 15 Years | 5% | 9,490 |
| 16 Years | 4% | 9,155 |
| 17 Years | 3% | 6,582 |
| 18 Years | 1% | 1,856 |
| 19 Years | 0% | 719 |
| 20 Years | 0% | 452 |

| Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal | Percent | Number |
|---|---------|---------|
| Neglect | 63% | 130,289 |
| Drug Abuse (Parent) | 36% | 73,921 |
| Caretaker Inability To Cope | 14% | 28,083 |
| Physical Abuse | 12% | 25,836 |
| Housing | 9% | 19,406 |
| Child Behavior Problem | 7% | 15,375 |
| Parent Incarceration | 6% | 12,142 |
| Alcohol Abuse (Parent) | 6% | 11,922 |
| Abandonment | 5% | 9,758 |
| Sexual Abuse | 4% | 8,329 |
| Drug Abuse (Child) | 2% | 4,637 |
| Child Disability | 2% | 3,840 |
| Parent Death | 1% | 2,513 |
| Relinquishment | 1% | 1,789 |
| Alcohol Abuse (Child) | 0% | 707 |

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

NOTE: These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries.

Children Exiting Foster Care during FY 2021 - N=214,971

| Age at Exit | Years | Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number |
|-------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Mean | 8.2 | American Indian/Alaska Native | 2% | 4,812 |
| Median | 7.0 | Asian | 1% | 1,181 |

| Age at Exit | Percent | Number | Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|--|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 4% | 8,361 | Black or African American | 21% | 44,545 |
| 1 Year | 8% | 17,269 | Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0% | 636 |
| 2 Years | 9% | 18,292 | Hispanic (of any race) | 21% | 45,391 |
| 3 Years | 8% | 15,950 | White | 46% | 97,579 |
| 4 Years | 7% | 14,043 | Unknown/Unable to Determine | 1% | 3,162 |
| 5 Years | 6% | 12,675 | Two or More Races | 8% | 17,092 |

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

| Age at Exit | Percent | Number | Reason for Discharge | Percent | Number |
|-------------|---------|--------|--|---------|---------|
| 6 Years | 5% | 11,620 | Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s) | 47% | 100,004 |
| 7 Years | 5% | 10,692 | Living with Other Relative(s) | 6% | 12,531 |
| 8 Years | 5% | 9,916 | Adoption | 25% | 53,546 |
| 9 Years | 4% | 8,923 | Emancipation | 9% | 19,130 |
| 10 Years | 4% | 8,587 | Guardianship | 12% | 25,023 |
| 11 Years | 4% | 8,321 | Transfer to Another Agency | 1% | 2,290 |
| 12 Years | 4% | 8,258 | Runaway | 0% | 552 |
| 13 Years | 4% | 8,213 | Death of Child | 0% | 368 |
| 14 Years | 4% | 8,387 | | | |
| 15 Years | 4% | 8,214 | | | |
| 16 Years | 4% | 8,553 | | | |
| 17 Years | 4% | 8,278 | | | |
| 18 Years | 7% | 15,015 | | | |
| 19 Years | 1% | 1,473 | | | |
| 20 Years | 1% | 1,261 | | | |

| Time in Care | Months |
|--------------|--------|
| Mean | 21.9 |
| Median | 17.5 |

| Time in Care | Percent | Number |
|-------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month | 7% | 14,606 |
| 1 - 5 Months | 12% | 25,850 |
| 6 - 11 Months | 16% | 34,836 |
| 12 - 17 Months | 17% | 35,534 |
| 18 - 23 Months | 14% | 30,242 |
| 24 - 29 Months | 10% | 21,964 |
| 30 - 35 Months | 7% | 15,392 |
| 3 - 4 Years | 12% | 26,456 |
| 5 Years or More | 5% | 9,779 |

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2021 - N=113,589

| Age as of September 30th | Years | Age at Entry into Foster Care | Years |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Mean | 7.5 | Mean | 4.8 |
| Median | 7.0 | Median | 4.0 |

| Age as of September 30th | Percent | Number | Age at Entry into Foster Care | Percent | Number |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|-------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 3% | 3,740 | Less than 1 Year | 27% | 31,010 |
| 1 Year | 9% | 10,684 | 1 Year | 8% | 9,025 |
| 2 Years | 9% | 10,731 | 2 Years | 7% | 7,758 |
| 3 Years | 8% | 8,950 | 3 Years | 6% | 7,338 |
| 4 Years | 7% | 7,844 | 4 Years | 6% | 6,802 |
| 5 Years | 6% | 6,852 | 5 Years | 6% | 6,571 |
| 6 Years | 6% | 6,506 | 6 Years | 6% | 6,303 |
| 7 Years | 5% | 5,880 | 7 Years | 5% | 5,989 |
| 8 Years | 5% | 5,691 | 8 Years | 5% | 5,680 |
| 9 Years | 5% | 5,443 | 9 Years | 5% | 5,411 |
| 10 Years | 5% | 5,234 | 10 Years | 4% | 5,049 |
| 11 Years | 5% | 5,222 | 11 Years | 4% | 4,683 |
| 12 Years | 5% | 5,418 | 12 Years | 4% | 4,026 |
| 13 Years | 5% | 5,597 | 13 Years | 3% | 3,463 |
| 14 Years | 5% | 5,469 | 14 Years | 2% | 2,410 |
| 15 Years | 5% | 5,613 | 15 Years | 1% | 1,405 |
| 16 Years | 4% | 4,977 | 16 Years | 0% | 535 |
| 17 Years | 3% | 3,738 | 17 Years | 0% | 113 |

| Placement Type | Percent | Number | Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|--|---------|--------|
| Pre-Adoptive Home | 13% | 14,155 | American Indian/Alaska Native | 2% | 2,214 |
| Foster Family Home (Relative) | 28% | 31,148 | Asian | 0% | 469 |
| Foster Family Home (Non-Relative) | 51% | 57,416 | Black or African American | 21% | 23,838 |
| Group Home | 3% | 3,589 | Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0% | 238 |
| Institution | 5% | 5,424 | Hispanic (of any race) | 23% | 26,145 |
| Supervised Independent Living | 0% | 105 | White | 43% | 49,325 |
| Runaway | 1% | 642 | Unknown/Unable to Determine | 1% | 1,355 |
| Trial Home Visit | 1% | 604 | Two or More Races | 9% | 9,825 |

| Sex | Percent | Number |
|--------|---------|--------|
| Male | 52% | 59,170 |
| Female | 48% | 54,412 |

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

³ Waiting children are identified as children who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parents' parental rights have been terminated. Children 16 years old and older whose parents' parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation have been excluded from the estimate.

| Time in Care | Months | Of Children Waiting for Adoption whose Parents' Parental Rights have been Terminated as of the Last Day of the FY (N=64,985), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2021 | |
|--------------|--------|--|--|
| Mean | 33.7 | | |
| Median | 28.1 | | |

| Time in Care | Percent | Number | Time Since TPR | Months |
|-------------------|---------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Less than 1 Month | 0% | 468 | Mean | 19.0 |
| 1 - 5 Months | 3% | 3,215 | Median | 9.0 |
| 6 - 11 Months | 8% | 8,946 | | |
| 12 - 17 Months | 12% | 14,064 | | |
| 18 - 23 Months | 16% | 17,727 | | |
| 24 - 29 Months | 16% | 17,699 | | |
| 30 - 35 Months | 11% | 12,423 | | |
| 3 - 4 Years | 23% | 26,381 | | |
| 5 Years or More | 11% | 12,666 | | |

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2021⁴ - N=54,240

| Age at Adoption | Years | Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|--|--|
| Mean | 6.1 | Mean | | |
| Median | 5.0 | Median | | |

| Age at Adoption | Percent | Number | Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption | Percent | Number |
|------------------|---------|--------|--|---------|--------|
| Less than 1 Year | 2% | 831 | Less than 1 Month | 3% | 1,442 |
| 1 Year | 11% | 6,015 | 1 - 5 Months | 28% | 14,484 |
| 2 Years | 14% | 7,622 | 6 - 11 Months | 30% | 15,790 |
| 3 Years | 11% | 5,918 | 12 - 17 Months | 17% | 9,031 |
| 4 Years | 9% | 4,790 | 18 - 23 Months | 10% | 5,292 |
| 5 Years | 7% | 4,029 | 24 - 29 Months | 5% | 2,716 |
| 6 Years | 7% | 3,598 | 30 - 35 Months | 3% | 1,353 |
| 7 Years | 6% | 3,203 | 3 - 4 Years | 4% | 1,909 |
| 8 Years | 5% | 2,838 | 5 Years or More | 1% | 529 |
| 9 Years | 5% | 2,511 | | | |
| 10 Years | 4% | 2,305 | | | |
| 11 Years | 4% | 2,148 | | | |
| 12 Years | 4% | 1,945 | | | |
| 13 Years | 3% | 1,713 | | | |
| 14 Years | 3% | 1,485 | | | |
| 15 Years | 2% | 1,147 | | | |
| 16 Years | 2% | 1,101 | | | |
| 17 Years | 2% | 905 | | | |
| 18 Years | 0% | 101 | | | |
| 19 Years | 0% | 14 | | | |
| 20 Years | 0% | 12 | | | |

| Race/Ethnicity | Percent | Number |
|--|---------|--------|
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 2% | 916 |
| Asian | 0% | 210 |
| Black or African American | 17% | 9,087 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0% | 168 |
| Hispanic (of any race) | 20% | 10,991 |
| White | 50% | 27,145 |
| Unknown/Unable to Determine | 1% | 586 |
| Two or More Races | 9% | 5,046 |

NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

⁴ Note that the adoption data reported in this section are from the AFCARS Adoption file. Therefore, the number of adoptions reported here may not equal the number reported as discharges to adoption from foster care.

| Adoptive Family Structure | Percent | Number | Sex | Percent | Number |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Married Couple | 68% | 35,940 | Male | 51% | 27,664 |
| Unmarried Couple | 4% | 2,008 | Female | 49% | 26,561 |
| Single Female | 25% | 13,307 | | | |
| Single Male | 3% | 1,799 | | | |

| Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption | Percent | Number | Receive Adoption Subsidy | Percent | Number |
|--|----------------|---------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Non-Relative | 10% | 5,018 | Yes | 93% | 50,499 |
| Foster Parent | 55% | 27,912 | No | 7% | 3,679 |
| Stepparent | 0% | 100 | | | |
| Other Relative | 34% | 17,345 | | | |

FY 2021 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

Definitions and additional supporting information relevant to the populations presented in this report can be found by clicking on the tabs above the area chart displayed when using this link:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/trends-foster-care-adoption>