



The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY 2019 Estimates¹ as of June 23, 2020 - No. 27

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2019 data²

Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	421,418	430,101	436,656	435,031	423,997
Number entered foster care during the FY	268,860	273,332	270,081	262,791	251,359
Number exited foster care during the FY	242,051	250,500	248,386	251,161	248,669
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	663,406	680,433	685,007	686,151	672,594
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	109,776	116,391	123,450	125,285	122,216
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	53,536	57,176	59,469	62,997	66,035
Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated as of the last day of the FY	62,230	65,447	69,724	71,480	71,335

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2019 N 423,997

Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number
Mean	8.4	Male	52%	218,415
Median	7.7	Female	48%	205,523

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	30,626	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	17,933
1 Year	9%	36,425	Foster Family Home (Relative)	32%	133,405
2 Years	8%	31,949	Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	46%	195,352
3 Years	7%	28,056	Group Home	4%	17,991
4 Years	6%	25,430	Institution	6%	25,832
5 Years	5%	23,026	Supervised Independent Living	2%	7,924
6 Years	5%	21,427	Runaway	1%	4,115
7 Years	5%	20,096	Trial Home Visit	5%	20,337

Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	55%	226,724
Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	13,873
Adoption	28%	113,950
Long Term Foster Care	2%	7,398
Emancipation	4%	16,880
Guardianship	4%	16,095
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	4%	17,915

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
9 Years	4%	18,232
10 Years	4%	18,114
11 Years	4%	18,156
12 Years	4%	17,853
13 Years	4%	18,155
14 Years	4%	18,844
15 Years	5%	20,429
16 Years	5%	22,453
17 Years	5%	22,849
18 Years	1%	5,829
19 Years	1%	3,743
20 Years	1%	3,093

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 23, 2020 are included in this report. The Department has requested Puerto Rico resubmit their AFCARS data; therefore, PR data are excluded from this Report, including in the "Numbers at a Glance" counts. 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).

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number	Time in Care	Months
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	10,152	Mean	19.6
Asian	1%	2,179	Median	13.3
Black or African American	23%	97,142		
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1,135		
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	87,625		
White	44%	185,825		
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	6,148		
Two or More Races	8%	32,284		

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

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	21,145
1 - 5 Months	21%	90,922
6 - 11 Months	20%	83,617
12 - 17 Months	16%	66,290
18 - 23 Months	11%	45,400
24 - 29 Months	8%	33,317
30 - 35 Months	5%	21,750
3 - 4 Years	9%	39,910
5 Years or More	5%	21,646

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2019 N 251,359

Age at Entry	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Mean	7.2	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,596
Median	6.3	Asian	1%	1,617

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	19%	47,147
1 Year	7%	18,199
2 Years	6%	16,120
3 Years	6%	14,702
4 Years	5%	13,534
5 Years	5%	12,576
6 Years	5%	11,738
7 Years	4%	10,948
8 Years	4%	10,234
9 Years	4%	10,047
10 Years	4%	9,764
11 Years	4%	9,739
12 Years	4%	10,022
13 Years	4%	10,319
14 Years	4%	11,065
15 Years	5%	11,934
16 Years	5%	11,653
17 Years	3%	8,256
18 Years	1%	1,967
19 Years	0%	880
20 Years	0%	488

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Black or African American	21%	53,089
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	774
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,780
White	46%	114,462
Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,730
Two or More Races	7%	18,055

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

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	63%	158,258
Drug Abuse (Parent)	34%	86,694
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	34,594
Physical Abuse	13%	32,008
Housing	10%	25,658
Child Behavior Problem	8%	20,871
Parent Incarceration	7%	17,669
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	5%	13,637
Abandonment	5%	11,424
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,782
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	5,500
Child Disability	2%	3,969
Relinquishment	1%	2,350
Parent Death	1%	2,141
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	991

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 2019 N 248,669

Age at Exit	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Mean	8.6	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,549
Median	7.6	Asian	1%	1,480

Age at Exit	Percent	Number	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	10,681	Black or African American	21%	52,099
1 Year	9%	20,979	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	632
2 Years	9%	21,454	Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,550
3 Years	8%	18,508	White	46%	114,978
4 Years	7%	16,236	Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,459
5 Years	6%	14,632	Two or More Races	7%	18,135
6 Years	5%	13,389			
7 Years	5%	12,126			
8 Years	5%	11,521			
9 Years	4%	10,970			
10 Years	4%	10,494			
11 Years	4%	9,910			
12 Years	4%	9,218			
13 Years	4%	8,987			
14 Years	4%	8,884			
15 Years	4%	9,149			
16 Years	4%	9,864			
17 Years	4%	9,152			
18 Years	7%	17,563			
19 Years	1%	1,692			
20 Years	0%	1,210			

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

Reason for Discharge	Percent	Number
Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	47%	117,010
Living with Other Relative(s)	6%	15,422
Adoption	26%	64,415
Emancipation	8%	20,445
Guardianship	11%	26,103
Transfer to Another Agency	1%	2,726
Runaway	0%	608
Death of Child	0%	385

Time in Care	Months
Mean	20.0
Median	15.5

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	8%	20,195
1 - 5 Months	14%	34,586
6 - 11 Months	18%	45,368
12 - 17 Months	17%	41,154
18 - 23 Months	13%	32,414
24 - 29 Months	10%	23,600
30 - 35 Months	6%	15,883
3 - 4 Years	10%	25,801
5 Years or More	4%	9,368

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2019 N 122,216

Age as of September 30th	Years	Age at Entry into Foster Care	Years
Mean	7.8	Mean	5.2
Median	7.1	Median	4.3

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,390	Less than 1 Year	26%	31,200
1 Year	10%	11,646	1 Year	8%	9,842
2 Years	9%	11,245	2 Years	7%	8,924
3 Years	8%	9,539	3 Years	7%	8,060
4 Years	7%	8,491	4 Years	6%	7,689
5 Years	6%	7,668	5 Years	6%	7,293
6 Years	6%	7,033	6 Years	6%	7,055
7 Years	5%	6,623	7 Years	6%	6,745
8 Years	5%	6,281	8 Years	5%	6,308
9 Years	5%	6,105	9 Years	5%	5,992
10 Years	5%	6,086	10 Years	4%	5,437
11 Years	5%	6,060	11 Years	4%	4,916
12 Years	5%	5,871	12 Years	4%	4,293
13 Years	5%	5,686	13 Years	3%	3,598
14 Years	5%	5,518	14 Years	2%	2,568
15 Years	4%	5,443	15 Years	1%	1,546
16 Years	4%	4,889	16 Years	1%	638
17 Years	3%	3,642	17 Years	0%	91

Placement Type	Percent	Number	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	13%	15,782	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,287
Foster Family Home (Relative)	25%	30,731	Asian	0%	487
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	53%	64,067	Black or African American	22%	26,378
Group Home	3%	3,896	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	251
Institution	5%	6,258	Hispanic (of any race)	22%	26,815
Supervised Independent Living	0%	108	White	44%	54,065
Runaway	0%	529	Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,371
Trial Home Visit	1%	623	Two or More Races	8%	10,291

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	64,082
Female	48%	58,129

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 (N=71,335), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2019	
Mean	31.2		
Median	25.6		
		Time Since TPR	Months
		Mean	17.6
		Median	9.0

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	0%	504
1 - 5 Months	3%	4,115
6 - 11 Months	9%	10,918
12 - 17 Months	16%	19,863
18 - 23 Months	17%	20,220
24 - 29 Months	15%	18,115
30 - 35 Months	10%	12,542
3 - 4 Years	20%	24,406
5 Years or More	9%	11,533

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2019⁴ N 66,035

Age at Adoption	Years	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	
Mean	6.4	Mean	11.8
Median	5.2	Median	8.9

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	2%	1,307	Less than 1 Month	3%	1,736
1 Year	12%	7,903	1 - 5 Months	28%	18,316
2 Years	14%	9,378	6 - 11 Months	35%	22,503
3 Years	11%	7,242	12 - 17 Months	17%	11,204
4 Years	9%	6,044	18 - 23 Months	8%	5,110
5 Years	8%	5,007	24 - 29 Months	4%	2,454
6 Years	7%	4,349	30 - 35 Months	2%	1,330
7 Years	6%	3,823	3 - 4 Years	2%	1,603
8 Years	5%	3,373	5 Years or More	1%	559
9 Years	5%	3,088			
10 Years	4%	2,886			
11 Years	4%	2,623			
12 Years	3%	2,236			
13 Years	3%	1,908			
14 Years	2%	1,485			
15 Years	2%	1,187			
16 Years	2%	1,144			
17 Years	1%	931			
18 Years	0%	88			
19 Years	0%	18			
20 Years	0%	6			

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,107
Asian	0%	266
Black or African American	18%	11,663
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	118
Hispanic (of any race)	20%	13,494
White	50%	32,835
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	782
Two or More Races	9%	5,707

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%	44,223	Male	51%	33,627
Unmarried Couple	3%	2,232	Female	49%	32,394
Single Female	26%	16,817			
Single Male	3%	2,220			

Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption	Percent	Number	Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
Non-Relative	11%	7,242	Yes	93%	61,434
Foster Parent	52%	33,357	No	7%	4,555
Stepparent	0%	93			
Other Relative	36%	23,202			

FY 2019 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

After the release of the FY 2016 AFCARS Report, the Children’s Bureau brought to the attention of the reader our continuing efforts to address AFCARS data quality and highlighted the issue of “dropped cases” (i.e., cases that appear in one six-month AFCARS submission without a date of discharge and do not appear in the subsequent six-month submission). The following link’s “Technical Discussion” tab provides a more detailed description of the dropped cases issue:

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

Early in our efforts to understand the dropped cases issue, it was understood that the majority fell into a category of those exiting care. However, more recent analyses include a category of instances in which record numbers change (i.e., child records undergo a merge process; hence, the child’s record is in the subsequent submission, but with a different record number). The records merge process typically happens when a child’s information exists in the State’s information system, but the child is inadvertently assigned a new record number, sometimes due to a re-entry into care. We do not believe the two aforementioned categories account for all dropped cases and will continue to work toward addressing the issue.

We have historically addressed the dropped cases by excluding these records from our AFCARS estimates, and we believe this has ameliorated most negative effects on the annual estimates.

Although there has been some decrease in the numbers of dropped cases, we have begun formally addressing the issue with each applicable State, beginning with the FY 2017 AFCARS data. To the extent practicable and reasonable, we will attempt to address prior years’ data. Thus, there may be some differences between historical numbers presented in this report compared to previous reports.