

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families,  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb>

# The AFCARS Report

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

**SOURCE:** Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2021 data<sup>2</sup>

## 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			
10 Years	4%	15,630			
11 Years	4%	15,485			
12 Years	4%	16,180			
13 Years	4%	17,378			
14 Years	5%	18,073			
15 Years	5%	19,471			
16 Years	5%	20,267			
17 Years	5%	20,661			
18 Years	2%	6,335			
19 Years	1%	4,227			
20 Years	1%	3,818			

  

Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	53%	201,297
Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	13,258
Adoption	28%	105,681
Long Term Foster Care	2%	7,046
Emancipation	5%	17,759
Guardianship	4%	15,797
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	6%	21,053

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

2 | Page

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 Adopted<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

5 | Page

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 2021<sup>4</sup> - N=54,240

Age at Adoption		Years	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption		Months
Mean		6.1	Mean		13.0
Median		5.0	Median		9.6

  

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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

6 | Page

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			Receive Adoption Subsidy	Percent	Number
	Percent	Number	Yes	93%	50,499
Non-Relative	10%	5,018	No	7%	3,679
Foster Parent	55%	27,912			
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>