



The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY¹ 2018 Estimates as of August 22, 2019 - No. 26

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2018 data²

Numbers at a Glance

Fiscal Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FY	414,259	427,439	434,168	441,071	437,283
Number entered foster care during the FY	264,531	269,091	272,995	269,799	262,956
Number exited foster care during the FY	235,843	242,250	249,027	246,964	250,103
Number served by the foster care system during the FY	650,007	669,557	682,956	687,959	687,345
Number waiting to be adopted on September 30 of the FY	106,636	109,951	116,654	123,754	125,422
Number waiting to be adopted for whom parental rights (for all living parents) were terminated during the FY	61,198	62,399	65,474	69,716	71,254
Number adopted with public child welfare agency involvement during the FY	50,668	53,555	57,238	59,491	63,123

Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2018 N 437,283

Age as of September 30th	Years	Sex	Percent	Number
Mean	8.3	Male	52%	226,156
Median	7.6	Female	48%	211,083

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Most Recent Placement Setting	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	7%	31,693	Pre-Adoptive Home	4%	17,707
1 Year	9%	37,972	Foster Family Home (Relative)	32%	139,004
2 Years	8%	33,407	Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	46%	198,753
3 Years	7%	29,408	Group Home	4%	19,253
4 Years	6%	26,380	Institution	6%	28,040
5 Years	5%	23,973	Supervised Independent Living	2%	7,214
6 Years	5%	22,076	Runaway	1%	4,247
7 Years	5%	21,009	Trial Home Visit	5%	21,630

Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
Reunify with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	56%	236,323
Live with Other Relative(s)	3%	12,792
Adoption	27%	116,288
Long Term Foster Care	2%	6,645
Emancipation	4%	17,107
Guardianship	4%	16,369
Case Plan Goal Not Yet Established	5%	19,408

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number
8 Years	5%	19,901
9 Years	4%	19,384
10 Years	4%	19,136
11 Years	4%	18,159
12 Years	4%	17,571
13 Years	4%	17,924
14 Years	4%	18,787
15 Years	5%	21,029
16 Years	5%	23,046
17 Years	5%	23,798
18 Years	1%	6,266
19 Years	1%	3,341
20 Years	1%	2,843

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

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by August 22, 2019 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).

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number	Time in Care	Months
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	10,449	Mean	19.7
Asian	0%	2,112	Median	13.2
Black or African American	23%	99,025		
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	1,053		
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	90,688		
White	44%	193,117		
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	5,899		
Two or More Races	8%	32,882		

Time in Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Month	5%	21,222
1 - 5 Months	21%	93,706
6 - 11 Months	20%	88,441
12 - 17 Months	16%	68,681
18 - 23 Months	11%	46,812
24 - 29 Months	8%	33,610
30 - 35 Months	5%	21,698
3 - 4 Years	9%	41,005
5 Years or More	5%	22,105

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

Children Entering Foster Care during FY 2018 N 262,956

Age at Entry	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Mean	7.1	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,856
Median	6.1	Asian	1%	1,567
		Black or African American	21%	55,608
		Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	787
		Hispanic (of any race)	20%	52,783
		White	47%	121,747
		Unknown/Unable to Determine	2%	4,689
		Two or More Races	7%	18,373

Age at Entry	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	19%	49,765
1 Year	7%	19,465
2 Years	7%	17,606
3 Years	6%	15,613
4 Years	5%	14,152
5 Years	5%	13,301
6 Years	5%	12,344
7 Years	4%	11,685
8 Years	4%	11,218
9 Years	4%	10,663
10 Years	4%	10,368
11 Years	4%	9,959
12 Years	4%	9,610
13 Years	4%	10,422
14 Years	4%	11,230
15 Years	5%	12,565
16 Years	5%	12,321
17 Years	3%	8,625
18 Years	0%	1,311
19 Years	0%	494
20 Years	0%	213

Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal	Percent	Number
Neglect	62%	163,543
Drug Abuse (Parent)	36%	94,386
Caretaker Inability To Cope	14%	35,802
Physical Abuse	13%	33,672
Housing	10%	27,323
Child Behavior Problem	9%	22,868
Parent Incarceration	7%	19,719
Alcohol Abuse (Parent)	5%	13,871
Abandonment	5%	12,088
Sexual Abuse	4%	9,894
Drug Abuse (Child)	2%	6,468
Child Disability	2%	4,399
Relinquishment	1%	2,733
Parent Death	1%	2,389
Alcohol Abuse (Child)	0%	1,032

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 2018 N 250,103

Age at Exit	Years	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number	
Mean	8.5	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	5,557	
Median	7.5	Asian	1%	1,473	
		Black or African American	21%	52,194	
		Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	633	
		Hispanic (of any race)	21%	51,565	
		White	46%	115,616	
		Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	3,531	
		Two or More Races	7%	18,344	
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
Less than 1 Year	5%	11,512	Reunification with Parent(s) or Primary Caretaker(s)	49%	121,631
1 Year	9%	21,275	Living with Other Relative(s)	7%	16,862
2 Years	9%	21,663	Adoption	25%	61,901
3 Years	7%	18,628	Emancipation	7%	17,844
4 Years	7%	16,548	Guardianship	11%	26,084
5 Years	6%	14,705	Transfer to Another Agency	1%	2,983
6 Years	5%	13,254	Runaway	0%	736
7 Years	5%	12,374	Death of Child	0%	323
8 Years	5%	11,751			
9 Years	5%	11,376			
10 Years	4%	10,779			
11 Years	4%	9,969			
12 Years	4%	9,022			
13 Years	3%	8,578			
14 Years	4%	8,782			
15 Years	4%	9,496			
16 Years	4%	10,391			
17 Years	4%	10,060			
18 Years	6%	15,975			
19 Years	1%	2,033			
20 Years	0%	751			
Time in Care	Months				
Mean	19.2				
Median	14.7				
Time in Care	Percent	Number			
Less than 1 Month	9%	21,613			
1 - 5 Months	15%	36,559			
6 - 11 Months	19%	48,117			
12 - 17 Months	17%	41,334			
18 - 23 Months	13%	31,571			
24 - 29 Months	9%	22,926			
30 - 35 Months	6%	15,451			
3 - 4 Years	10%	23,900			
5 Years or More	3%	8,390			

Children Waiting to be Adopted³ on September 30, 2018 N 125,422

Age as of September 30th	Years	Age at Entry into Foster Care	Years
Mean	7.7	Mean	5.1
Median	6.9	Median	4.2

Age as of September 30th	Percent	Number	Age at Entry into Foster Care	Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	4%	4,638	Less than 1 Year	26%	32,258
1 Year	10%	12,249	1 Year	8%	10,597
2 Years	9%	11,814	2 Years	8%	9,499
3 Years	8%	10,169	3 Years	7%	8,408
4 Years	7%	8,826	4 Years	6%	7,932
5 Years	6%	7,960	5 Years	6%	7,517
6 Years	6%	7,289	6 Years	6%	7,200
7 Years	5%	6,885	7 Years	6%	7,028
8 Years	5%	6,517	8 Years	5%	6,425
9 Years	5%	6,429	9 Years	5%	5,942
10 Years	5%	6,367	10 Years	4%	5,391
11 Years	5%	6,021	11 Years	4%	4,787
12 Years	5%	5,747	12 Years	3%	4,080
13 Years	4%	5,434	13 Years	3%	3,543
14 Years	4%	5,231	14 Years	2%	2,552
15 Years	4%	5,326	15 Years	1%	1,517
16 Years	4%	4,864	16 Years	0%	616
17 Years	3%	3,656	17 Years	0%	115

Placement Type	Percent	Number	Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
Pre-Adoptive Home	12%	15,578	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2,369
Foster Family Home (Relative)	27%	33,251	Asian	0%	509
Foster Family Home (Non-Relative)	52%	64,782	Black or African American	22%	27,397
Group Home	3%	3,989	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	209
Institution	5%	6,305	Hispanic (of any race)	22%	27,765
Supervised Independent Living	0%	108	White	44%	55,278
Runaway	0%	555	Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	1,342
Trial Home Visit	1%	678	Two or More Races	8%	10,122

Sex	Percent	Number
Male	52%	65,694
Female	48%	59,721

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=71,254), Time Elapsed since Termination of Parental Rights as of September 30, 2018	
Mean		30.8		
Median		25.1		

Time in Care	Percent	Number	Time Since TPR		Months
Less than 1 Month	0%	486	Mean		17.4
1 - 5 Months	3%	4,362	Median		9.0
6 - 11 Months	10%	11,952			
12 - 17 Months	17%	20,722			
18 - 23 Months	17%	20,948			
24 - 29 Months	15%	18,610			
30 - 35 Months	10%	12,761			
3 - 4 Years	19%	24,422			
5 Years or More	9%	11,159			

Children Adopted with Public Agency Involvement in FY 2018⁴ N 63,123

Age at Adoption		Years	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption			Months
Mean		6.1	Mean		11.6	
Median		4.9	Median		8.7	

Age at Adoption	Percent	Number	Time Elapsed from Termination of Parental Rights to Adoption			Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year	5%	2,924	Less than 1 Month	3%	1,688		
1 Year	12%	7,822	1 - 5 Months	29%	18,178		
2 Years	14%	8,754	6 - 11 Months	35%	21,414		
3 Years	11%	6,719	12 - 17 Months	17%	10,587		
4 Years	9%	5,520	18 - 23 Months	8%	4,729		
5 Years	7%	4,631	24 - 29 Months	3%	2,152		
6 Years	6%	4,002	30 - 35 Months	2%	1,242		
7 Years	5%	3,397	3 - 4 Years	2%	1,439		
8 Years	5%	3,130	5 Years or More	1%	530		
9 Years	5%	2,977					
10 Years	4%	2,706					
11 Years	4%	2,341					
12 Years	3%	1,982					
13 Years	3%	1,669					
14 Years	2%	1,420					
15 Years	2%	1,082					
16 Years	2%	1,000					
17 Years	1%	853					
18 Years	0%	84					
19 Years	0%	10					
20 Years	0%	9					

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Number
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,059
Asian	0%	270
Black or African American	17%	10,795
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	113
Hispanic (of any race)	21%	13,327
White	49%	30,924
Unknown/Unable to Determine	1%	832
Two or More Races	9%	5,614

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%	42,237	Male	49%	31,183
Unmarried Couple	3%	2,173	Female	51%	31,935
Single Female	25%	15,704			
Single Male	3%	2,080			
Relationship of Adoptive Parents to Child Prior to Adoption			Receive Adoption Subsidy		
	Percent	Number		Percent	Number
Non-Relative	12%	7,373	Yes	93%	58,877
Foster Parent	52%	31,431	No	7%	4,215
Stepparent	0%	55			
Other Relative	36%	21,951			

FY 2018 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.