



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
8 Years	5%	19,901	Case Plan Goal	Percent	Number
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			
			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

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		
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%	21,222		
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		

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	
			NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.				
Age at Entry		Percent	Number	Circumstances Associated with Child's Removal		Percent	Number
Less than 1 Year		19%	49,765	Neglect		62%	163,543
1 Year		7%	19,465	Drug Abuse (Parent)		36%	94,386
2 Years		7%	17,606	Caretaker Inability To Cope		14%	35,802
3 Years		6%	15,613	Physical Abuse		13%	33,672
4 Years		5%	14,152	Housing		10%	27,323
5 Years		5%	13,301	Child Behavior Problem		9%	22,868
6 Years		5%	12,344	Parent Incarceration		7%	19,719
7 Years		4%	11,685	Alcohol Abuse (Parent)		5%	13,871
8 Years		4%	11,218	Abandonment		5%	12,088
9 Years		4%	10,663	Sexual Abuse		4%	9,894
10 Years		4%	10,368	Drug Abuse (Child)		2%	6,468
11 Years		4%	9,959	Child Disability		2%	4,399
12 Years		4%	9,610	Relinquishment		1%	2,733
13 Years		4%	10,422	Parent Death		1%	2,389
14 Years		4%	11,230	Alcohol Abuse (Child)		0%	1,032
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				

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			Age at Entry into Foster Care		
Mean			Mean		
Median			Median		
Age as of September 30th			Age at Entry into Foster Care		
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			Race/Ethnicity		
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			NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.		
Male	52%	65,694			
Female	48%	59,721			

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	Race/Ethnicity		Percent	Number
10 Years		4%	2,706	American Indian/Alaska Native		2%	1,059
11 Years		4%	2,341	Asian		0%	270
12 Years		3%	1,982	Black or African American		17%	10,795
13 Years		3%	1,669	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		0%	113
14 Years		2%	1,420	Hispanic (of any race)		21%	13,327
15 Years		2%	1,082	White		49%	30,924
16 Years		2%	1,000	Unknown/Unable to Determine		1%	832
17 Years		1%	853	Two or More Races		9%	5,614
18 Years		0%	84	NOTE: All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.			
19 Years		0%	10				
20 Years		0%	9				

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	Percent	Number	Receive Adoption Subsidy	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.