



# The AFCARS Report

Preliminary FY 2019 Estimates<sup>1</sup> as of June 23, 2020 - No. 27

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2019 data<sup>2</sup>

## 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  |

<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 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 Adopted<sup>3</sup> 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.

<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.

| 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 2019<sup>4</sup> 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.

<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.

| 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 |         |        | Receive Adoption Subsidy |         |        |
| 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.