

Children are placed in foster care when a child protective services worker and court have determined it is not safe for them to remain home. Displacement from their family and disruption of their usual routine and familiar surroundings is traumatizing for many children. Children in foster care need strong relationships with caring adults, a network of social support, and services to cope with the challenging circumstances of home removal. Children who are older, are a racial or ethnic minority, have special needs, or suffer from a behavioral or mental disorder are more likely to experience multiple foster care placements and stay in care longer. Young people who “age out” of foster care (instead of returning home or being adopted) may face challenges to making a successful transition to adulthood.

Children in foster care

	DC	US
Number of children in foster care ¹	947	427,901
Foster care rate per 1,000 ²	4	4
Number of children who entered foster care ³	437	269,499
Average length of time in foster care ⁴	31 months	20 months
Percent of children in foster care for 5 or more years	15%	6%

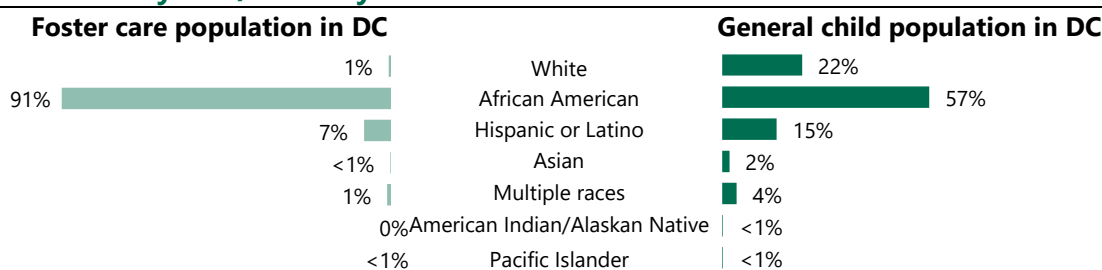
Age distribution of children in foster care⁵

	Less than 1 year	1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 to 20 years
DC	4%	27%	20%	22%	26%
US	7%	33%	23%	21%	15%

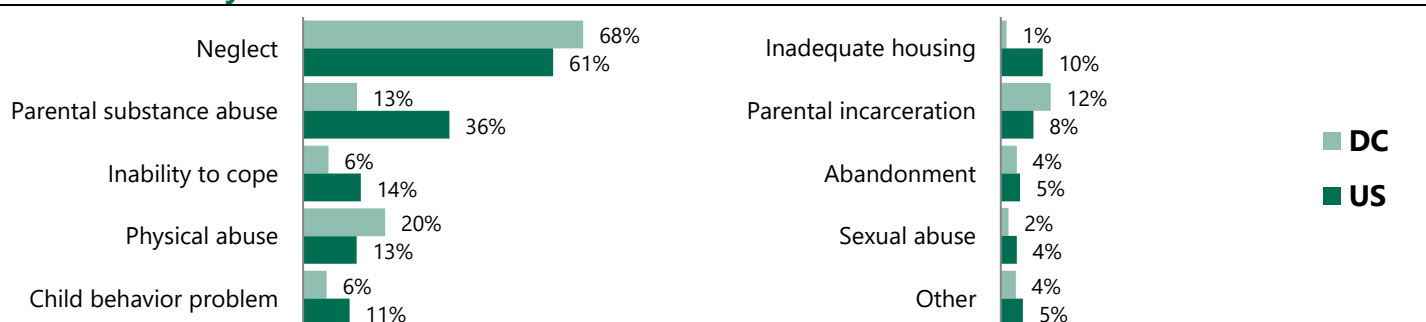
Gender of children in foster care

	DC	US
Female	49%	48%
Male	51%	52%

Foster care caseload by race/ethnicity⁶

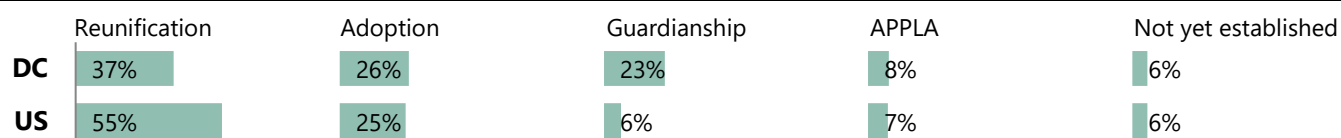


Foster care entry reasons⁷

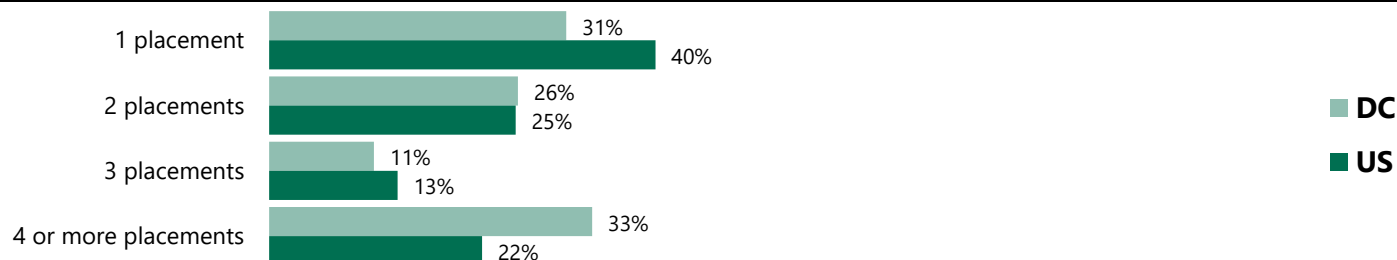


Source, unless specified otherwise: This information is from the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), and represents the federal fiscal year 2015 reporting period (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015). Unless otherwise noted, for each calculation, children who were missing data on the relevant indicator were excluded from analyses.

Case plan goal for children in foster care⁸



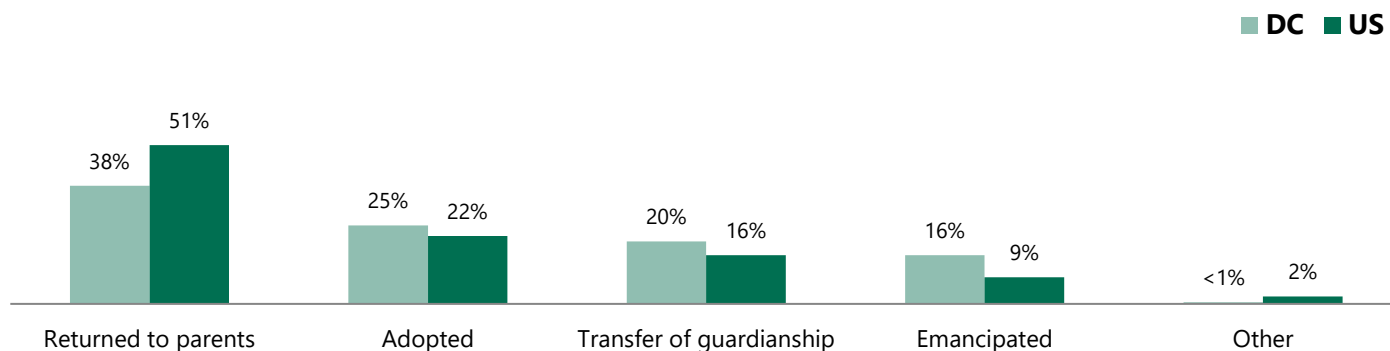
Number of different foster care placements⁹



Foster care by placement type¹⁰



Outcomes of children exiting foster care¹¹



Aging out of foster care

	DC	US
Of children who aged out of foster care, percent who had been in care since before age 13	44%	20%
Number of children who were at risk of aging out of foster care ¹²	117	44,753

¹ Number of children of all ages currently in foster care on September 30, 2015.

² Foster care rate is based on data from the U. S. Census Bureau and is publicly available at the Kids Count Data Center.

³ Number of children whose date of most recent removal was during the 2015 federal fiscal year.

⁴ Length of stay in care is calculated based on the current removal episode.

⁵ Does not include children over age 20.

⁶ If a child is determined to be of Hispanic origin, they are only counted as Hispanic and are not included in any of the other racial/ethnic categories. Data for the general child population under age 18 is from the U. S. Census Bureau and is publicly available from the Kids Count Data Center.

⁷ For children entering care in FY 2015. "Other" includes drug or alcohol abuse by the child, child's disability, relinquishment, and parental death.

⁸ APPLA stands for Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

⁹ The number of places the child has lived, including the current setting (except for trial home visits), during the current removal episode.

¹⁰ Other placement types include pre-adoptive home, runaway, supervised independent living, and trial home visit.

¹¹ Emancipation means the child/youth legally reached majority (i.e., is considered an adult) due to age, marriage, etc.

¹² Includes children aged 9 and over with a case goal of long term foster care or emancipation.