

Foster Care

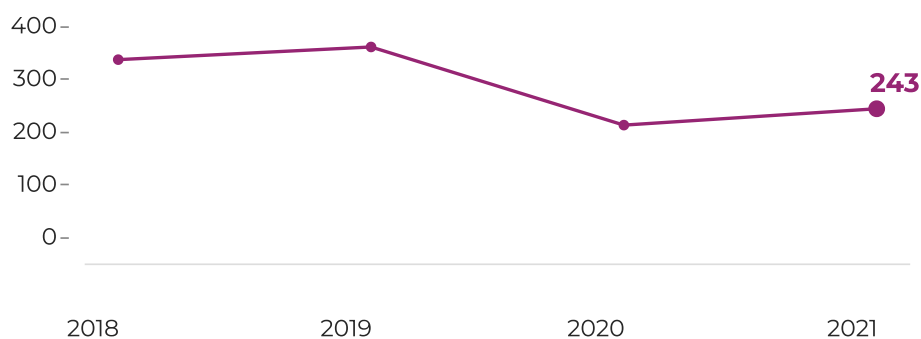
District of Columbia

Children are placed in foster care when a child protective services worker and court have determined that it is not safe for them to remain in their home. This decision should not be taken lightly: Separation from parents and disruptions from usual routines and familiar surroundings are traumatic for 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 family separation.

Entering foster care

Number and rate of children entering foster care

Number of children entering foster care¹



Rate of entries into foster care per 1,000 children²

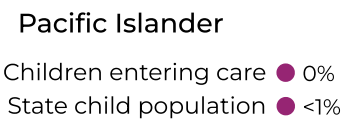
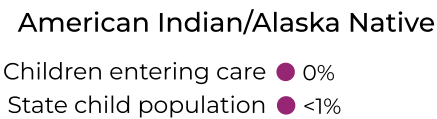
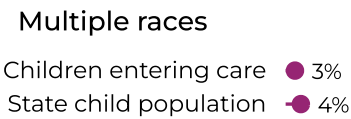
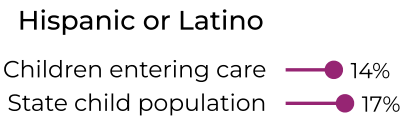
	District of Columbia	U.S.
2018	2.7	3.5
2019	2.8	3.4
2020	1.6	2.9
2021	1.9	2.8

First-time entries into foster care

	District of Columbia	United States
Number of children entering foster care for the first time	183	165,175
Percent of children entering foster care for the first time	75%	81%

Demographics of children entering foster care

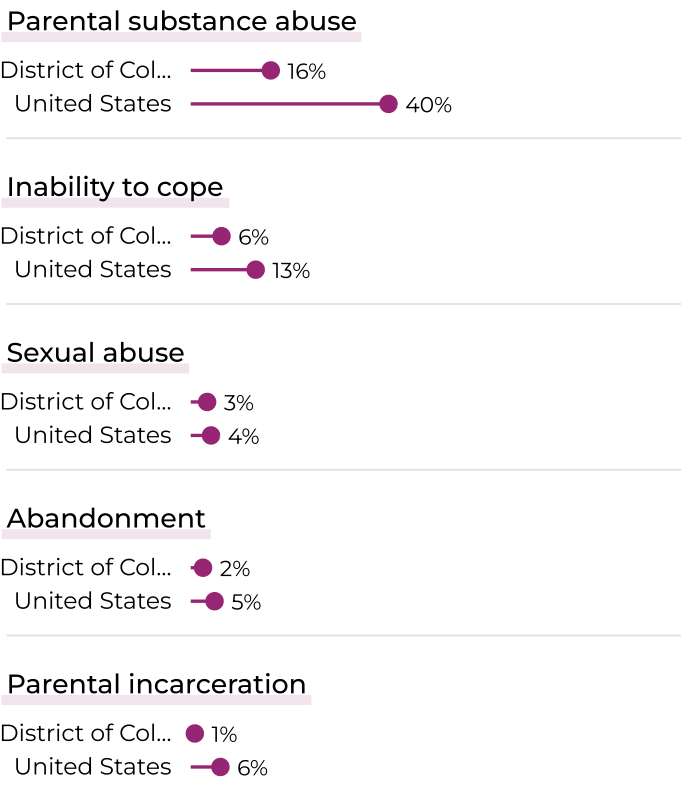
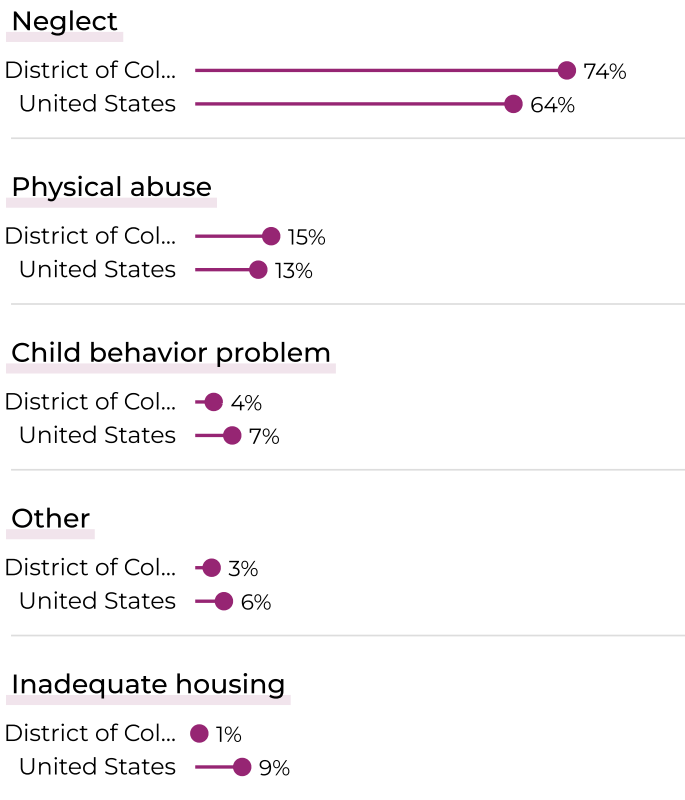
Race and ethnicity³



Age distribution



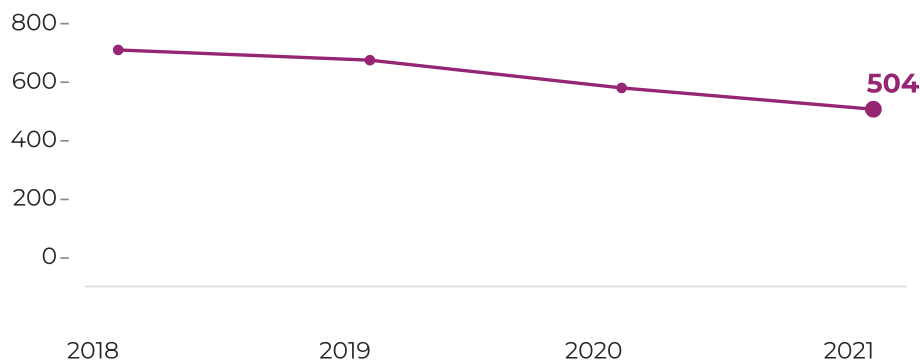
Reasons for entering foster care⁴



In foster care

Number and rate of children in foster care

Number of children in foster care⁵



Rate of children in foster care per 1,000 children⁶

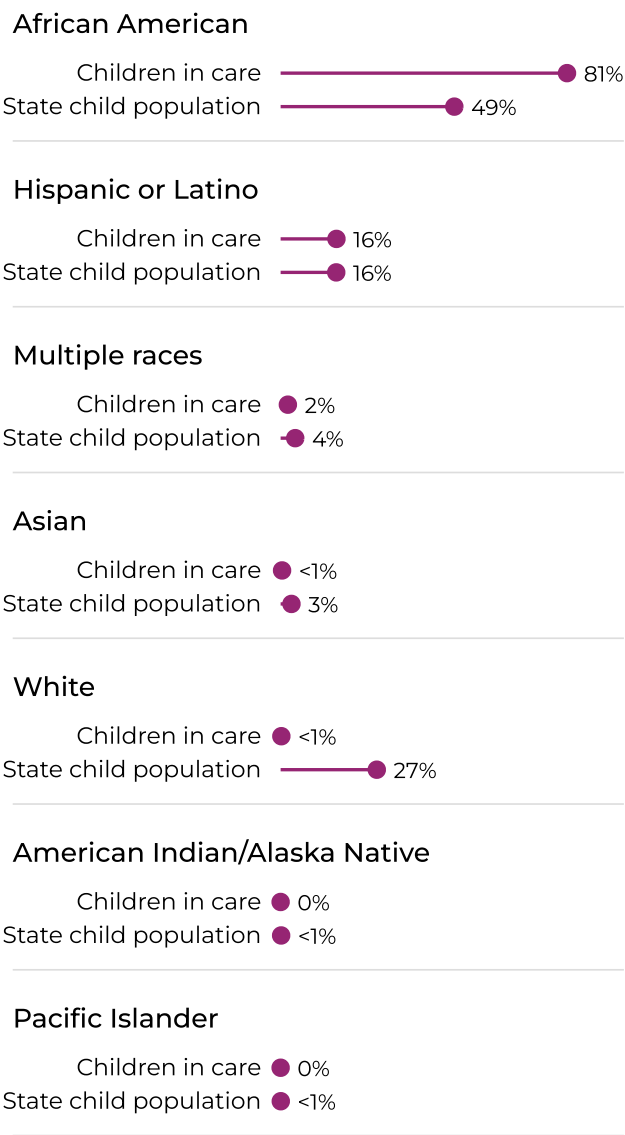
	District of Columbia	U.S.
2018	4.5	5.0
2019	4.2	4.9
2020	3.6	4.7
2021	3.2	4.5

Other information on children in foster care

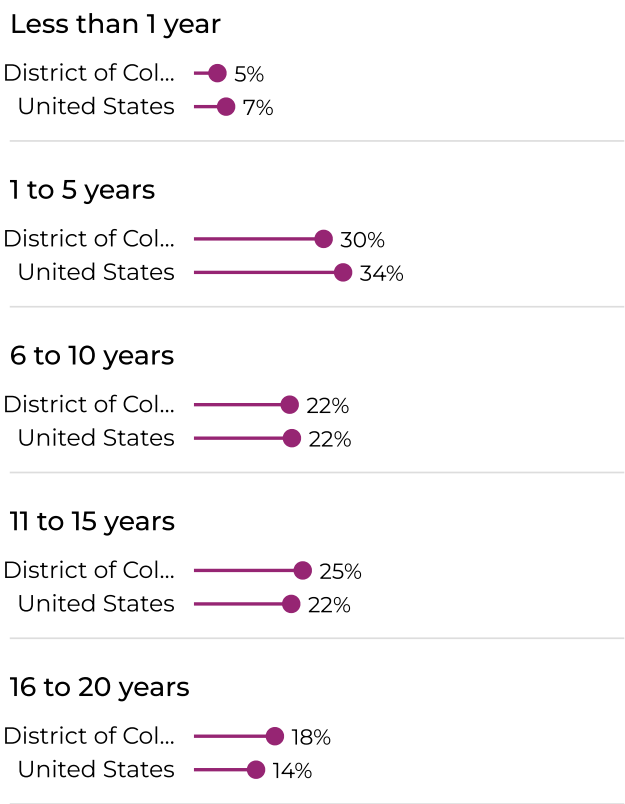
	District of Columbia	United States
Average number of removals ⁷	1.3	1.3
Percent of children entering foster care for the first time	75%	81%
Average length of time in foster care ⁸	24.5 months	21.7 months

Demographics of children in foster care

Race and ethnicity

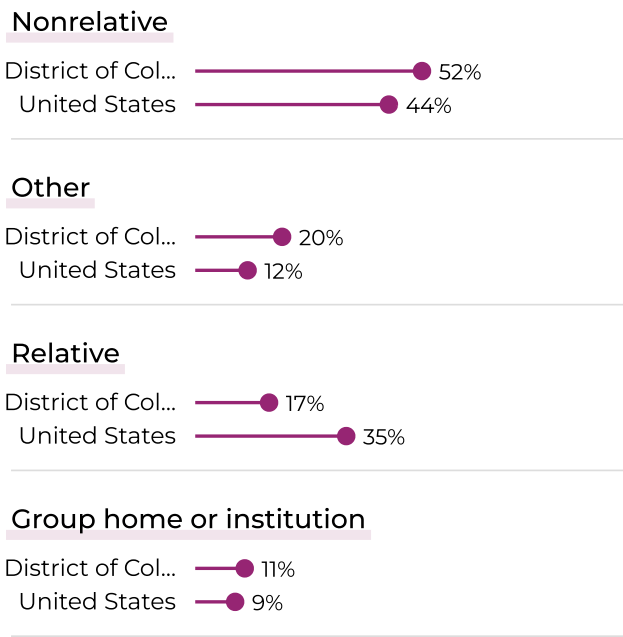


Age distribution

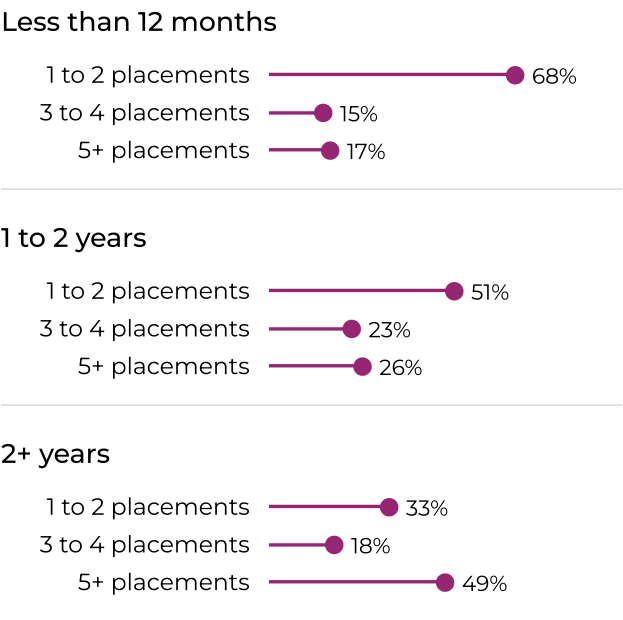


Placement settings and stability for children in foster care

Current placement setting⁹



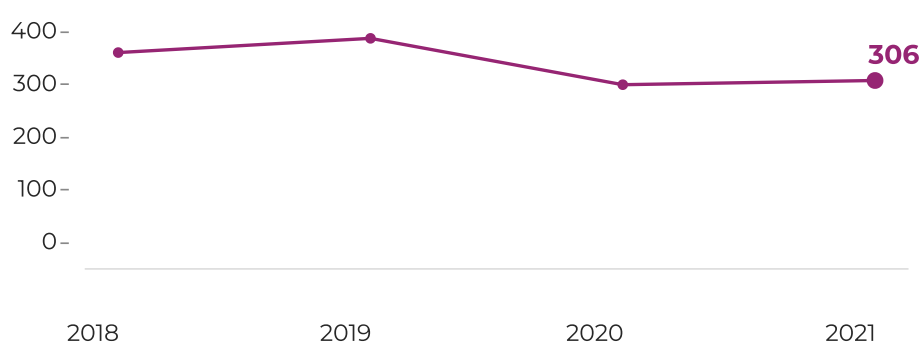
Number of placements by length of time in care



Exiting foster care

Number and rate of children exiting foster care

Number of children exiting foster care¹⁰



Rate of children exiting foster care per 1,000 children¹¹

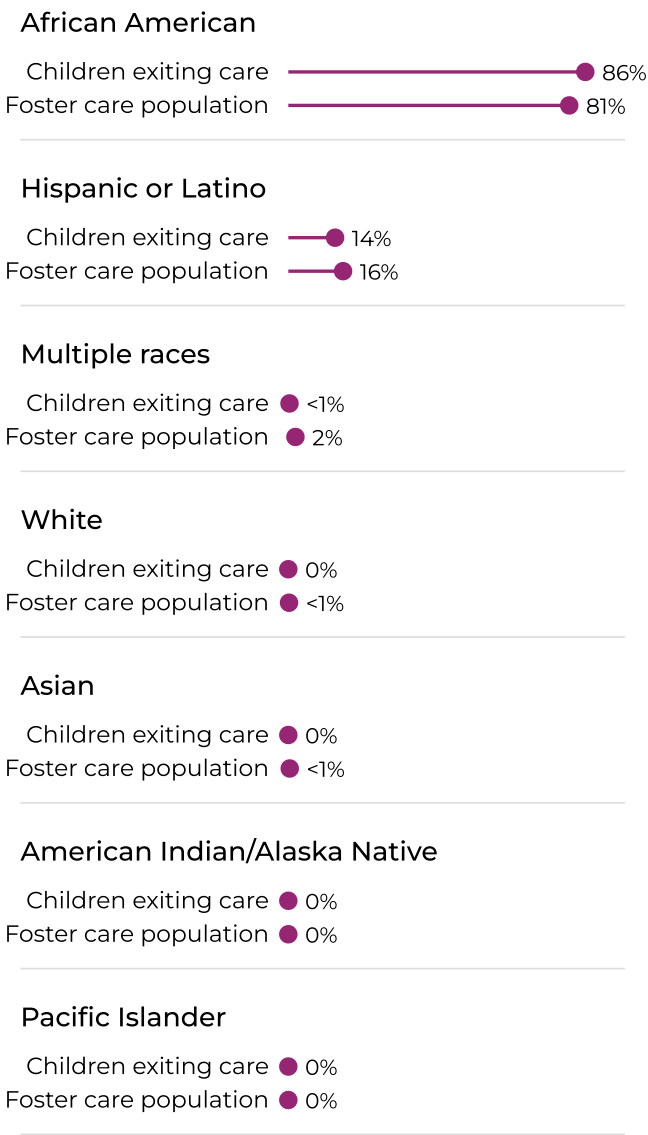
	District of Columbia	U.S.
2018	2.3	2.9
2019	2.4	2.9
2020	1.9	2.6
2021	2.0	2.4

Time in foster care prior to exiting

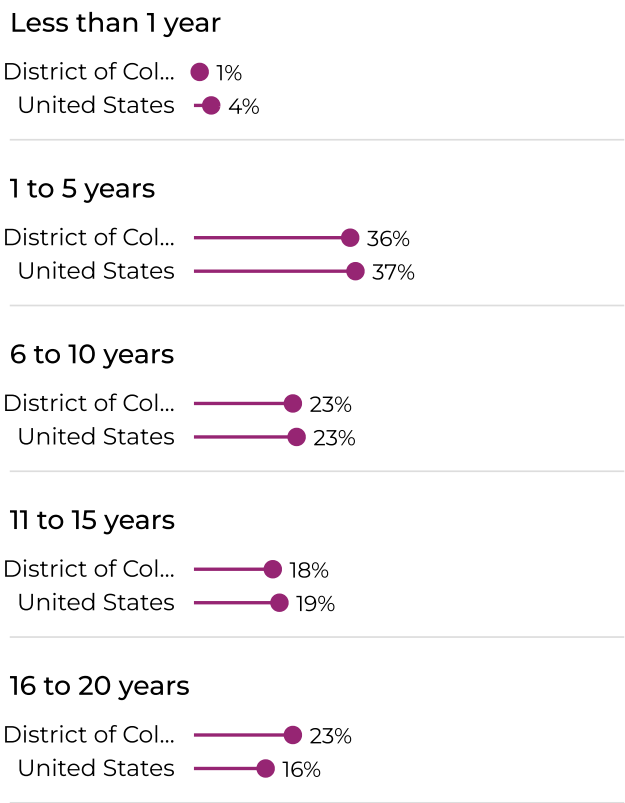
	District of Columbia	United States
Number of children exiting foster care in less than 30 days ¹²	34	30,196
Percent of children exiting foster care in less than 30 days	14%	15%

Demographics of children exiting foster care

Race and ethnicity



Age distribution



Outcomes of children exiting foster care

Adoption



Emancipation



Other



Reunification



With relative or guardianship



Source, unless specified otherwise:

The data used in this publication were obtained from the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect and have been used in accordance with its Terms of Use Agreement license. The data represent the federal fiscal years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 reporting periods (October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018, October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019, October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020, October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021, respectively). Unless otherwise noted, for each calculation, children who were missing data on the relevant indicator were excluded from analyses. The Administration on Children, Youth and Families, the Children's Bureau, the original dataset collection personnel or funding source, NDACAN, Cornell University and their agents or employees bear no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

Datasets used include:

- Dataset #235, AFCARS Foster Care File FY2018, Version 3
- Dataset #239, AFCARS Foster Care File FY2019, Version 2
- Dataset #255, AFCARS Foster Care File FY2020
- Dataset #274, AFCARS Foster Care FY2021; Dataset #275, AFCARS Adoption FY2021

Notes

¹All figures related to entering foster care include children from birth to age 17 who entered care during the FFY.

²All rates are calculated using general child population data from the U. S. Census Bureau from 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 which are publicly available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

³If a child is determined to be of Hispanic origin, they are only counted as Hispanic and are not included in any other racial/ethnic categories. Data for the general child population under age 20 in 2021 are from the U. S. Census Bureau which are publicly available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

⁴For children entering care in FFY 2021. Other entry reasons include drug or alcohol abuse by the child, child's disability, relinquishment, and parental death. Total may exceed 100 percent because children could have more than one entry reason.

⁵All figures related to children currently in care include children from birth to age 20 in foster care on the last day of the FFY.

⁶All rates are calculated using general child population data (birth to age 20) from the U. S. Census Bureau from 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 which are publicly available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

⁷Average number of times children were removed from the home, including the most recent removal.

⁸Length of stay in care is calculated based on the current removal episode.

⁹Current placement setting as of September 30, 2021. Other placement types include pre-adoptive home, runaway, supervised independent living, and trial home visit.

¹⁰All figures related to exits from care include children from birth to age 20 exiting care during the FFY.

¹¹All rates are calculated using general child population data (birth to age 20) from the U. S. Census Bureau from 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 which are publicly available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

¹²Includes children birth to age 17 that entered foster care in FFY 2021 and exited in less than 30 days.