

The AFCARS Dashboard

(Print Version)

Preliminary FFY¹ 2025 Estimates as of February 27, 2026 - No. 33

SOURCE: Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FFY 2025 data²

Numbers at a Glance						
Federal fiscal year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number entering foster care during the FFY	216,450	206,867	186,602	175,060	172,600	175,008
Number in foster care on September 30 of the FFY	407,332	391,641	368,530	339,309	327,364	331,747
Number exiting foster care during the FFY	223,918	214,542	201,372	186,870	179,246	169,927
Number served by the foster care system during the FFY	631,192	606,145	569,879	526,187	506,617	501,745
Number with an adoption goal ³ on September 30 of the FFY	110,276	105,822	101,401	80,292	73,312	67,249
Number legally free on September 30 of the FFY	66,846	68,287	67,825	55,177	51,901	46,308
Number exiting to adoption during the FFY	56,372	53,343	52,985	50,717	47,335	43,380

FFY 2025 AFCARS Foster Care Data Release

This report provides some, but not all, of the same information that is available in the dashboard. All information presented in this report is also available in the dashboard, so the dashboard is the primary source for AFCARS counts. This report is provided as a printer-friendly resource.

AFCARS 2020 Data

The dashboards presented here represent AFCARS based on the final rule published May 12, 2020 (see 85 FR 28410 and Technical Bulletin 20). Data collected under this final rule are referred to as "AFCARS 2020" data and were first collected starting with the 2023 federal fiscal year. Prior to that, AFCARS data were collected based on the final rule published December 22, 1993. These dashboards use only AFCARS 2020 data, except for data presented in the figures on the homepage that are for years prior to 2023. While counts for years prior to 2023 are displayed here, they should be considered separate from the counts for AFCARS 2020 data because the reporting population changed.

Data presented here include all 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and title IV-E tribes that submitted AFCARS 2020 data. Any reference in these dashboards to "jurisdictions" includes all 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the IV-E tribes, unless otherwise noted.

NOTE: NOTE: Washington first submitted AFCARS 2020 data beginning in FY 2025, and Wyoming first submitted AFCARS 2020 data beginning in FY 2024. The increase in population counts reflects the addition of Washington in FY 2025 and Wyoming in FY 2024.

Data Limitations

AFCARS 2020 data feature numerous new data elements and require a new reporting format for jurisdictions' data submissions. As a result, some jurisdictions are still in a capacity-building phase as they endeavor to submit high-quality and structurally compliant AFCARS data submissions. This is most impactful for data elements that are either new or have new components, particularly living arrangements, permanency plans, and termination of parental rights. Caution and reason should be used when interpreting these fields. If a result seems unusual or uncharacteristic, it may be due to the jurisdiction's continuing efforts to ensure its infrastructure, data system, policies, and training support accurate AFCARS 2020 submissions. Refer to AFCARS [Technical Bulletin 20](#) for specific information on the data elements and how data are to be reported.

While we recognize that jurisdictions continue to refine and improve their data submissions, the overall counts of entries, children in foster care on the last day of the federal fiscal year (September 30), and exits are approximately as expected. That said, we expect to see continued changes and improvement as jurisdictions refine their reporting methods. Publishing the report based on the current information recognizes the efforts jurisdictions have made to submit these data, provides the public with information about child welfare system dynamics, and serves as a starting point for continued improvement of the AFCARS data submissions.

¹ "FFY" refers to the federal fiscal year, from October 1 to September 30.

² Data from both the regular and revised AFCARS file submissions received by February 27, 2026, 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., the number in foster care on September 30 may not match the sum across ages for that group).

³ On September 30 of the federal fiscal year, the child's permanency plan was listed as "adoption."

Federal Fiscal Year

Data presented here are based on episodes occurring during a federal fiscal year, which spans October 1 to September 30. For example, federal fiscal year 2025 spans October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025.

Episode Reporting

Only the last episode during a federal fiscal year is counted. For example, if during a single federal fiscal year, a child entered care, exited care, reentered care, and exited care again, then only the reentry and subsequent exit are described here. The prior episode is not included. As such, the counts displayed here are counts of children and not counts of episodes.

Ages Included

All counts include children ages 0–23. We acknowledge that some are not actually “children,” but we use that language to be consistent with public documentation on AFCARS. Anywhere rates are provided, the ages are restricted to 0–17 to be consistent with other Children’s Bureau reports.

Adoptions

Summary information about adoption characteristics can be found in the report for the relevant population. All adoption information is with respect to adoptions from foster care and does not include non-foster care adoptions placed by a private agency. Adoption exits are summarized in the “Children Exiting Foster Care” section, and the subpopulations of children who have a permanency plan for adoption and children who are legally free are described in the tables in this report. See below for the definition of the term “legally free.”

Legally Free

Children for whom parental rights are terminated for all parents are referred to as “legally free.” This is separate from the child’s permanency plan, which may or may not indicate a plan for adoption.

Rates

Entry and foster care rates for demographic characteristics such as age and race are presented in different sections of this report. Entry rates can be found in the “Children Entering Foster Care” section, while foster care rates are located in the “Children in Foster Care” section. All rates are expressed per 1,000 children in the population and exclude ages 18–23 for consistency with other Children’s Bureau reports. The “Children Exiting Foster Care” section of the report does not include rate calculations.

Data Release Notes

These preliminary estimates are for AFCARS submissions received by February 27, 2026.



Children Entering Foster Care During FFY 2025 (N=175,008)

Age at entry	Percent	Number	Rate	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number	Rate
Less than 1 year	18%	31,814	8.73	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	4,278	6.81
1-5 years	27%	46,954	2.47	Asian	1%	1,055	0.24
6-10 years	21%	36,686	1.77	Black or African American	23%	40,413	3.87
11-16 years	28%	48,289	1.86	Hispanic (of any race) ⁴	21%	35,904	1.74
17 years	4%	6,712	1.46	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	527	3.15
18-23 years	3%	4,553		Two or more races	9%	15,613	4.27
Circumstances at entry⁵				White	42%	72,888	2.04
Educational neglect	4%	7,326		Abandoned/declined/unknown	2%	3,545	
Medical neglect	3%	4,559		Missing race/ethnicity	0%	785	
Neglect	55%	95,790		Permanency plan at entry	Percent	Number	
Physical abuse	13%	22,996		Adoption	2%	3,792	
Psychological abuse	4%	6,681		Guardianship	1%	2,053	
Sex trafficking	0%	523		Live with relative(s)	1%	1,577	
Sexual abuse	4%	7,053		Planned permanent living arrangement	2%	3,623	
Child alcohol use	0%	607		Reunification	60%	105,788	
Child behavior problem	8%	13,367		Not yet established	33%	58,174	
Child drug use	2%	2,832		Living arrangement at entry	Percent	Number	
Child requested placement	1%	2,548		Non-relative	29%	50,285	
Diagnosed condition	1%	2,356		Licensed	28%	49,357	
Runaway	1%	1,215		Unlicensed	1%	928	
Caretaker alcohol use	7%	12,424		Pre-adoptive	1%	2,436	
Caretaker drug use	29%	51,603		Licensed	1%	2,376	
Caretaker impairment cognitive	2%	4,071		Unlicensed	0%	60	
Caretaker impairment, physical or emotional	5%	8,972		Relative or kin	43%	75,035	
Death of caretaker	1%	2,122		Licensed	16%	28,741	
Domestic violence	10%	16,914		Unlicensed	26%	46,294	
Failure to return	1%	1,808		Shelter care	1%	2,131	
Homelessness	4%	7,552		Licensed	1%	2,019	
Inadequate housing	10%	17,046		Unlicensed	0%	112	
Incarceration of caretaker	7%	12,675		Therapeutic	5%	8,959	
Parental immigration detainment or deportation	0%	232		Licensed	4%	6,902	
Abandonment	5%	7,938		Unlicensed	1%	2,057	
Inadequate access to medical services	1%	1,277		Group home	7%	11,674	
Inadequate access to mental health	1%	2,310		Independent living	2%	3,566	
Prenatal alcohol exposure	1%	1,159		Institution	4%	7,327	
Prenatal drug exposure	4%	6,889		Juvenile justice	0%	783	
Voluntary adoption	1%	1,355		Placed at home	1%	1,778	
Whereabouts unknown	1%	895		Residential care	4%	7,779	
				Runaway	0%	863	
				Whereabouts unknown	1%	1,032	
				Missing data	1%	1,360	

⁴ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

⁵ Children can enter care with multiple circumstances; therefore, the summation of circumstances can exceed the total number of entries.



Children in Foster Care on September 30, 2025 (N=331,747)

Age on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	Rate	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number	Rate
Less than 1 year	7%	21,614	5.93	American Indian/Alaska Native	3%	8,505	13.36
1–5 years	29%	97,073	5.11	Asian	1%	1,802	0.34
6–10 years	21%	71,126	3.44	Black or African American	25%	82,749	7.35
11–16 years	28%	91,681	3.54	Hispanic (of any race) ⁶	21%	70,343	3.06
17 years	6%	20,303	4.43	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	799	4.46
18–23 years	9%	29,950		Two or more races	9%	30,005	7.81
Permanency plan on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number		White	40%	131,371	3.50
Adoption	20%	67,249		Abandoned/declined/unknown	2%	5,375	
Guardianship	6%	18,593		Missing race/ethnicity	0%	798	
Live with relative(s)	1%	4,460		Living arrangement on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	
Planned permanent living arrangement	10%	31,649		Non-relative	28%	91,412	
Reunification	45%	149,219		Licensed	27%	89,533	
Not yet established	18%	60,577		Unlicensed	1%	1,879	
				Pre-adoptive	3%	8,554	
				Licensed	2%	7,484	
				Unlicensed	0%	1,070	
				Relative or kin	39%	128,120	
				Licensed	22%	71,455	
				Unlicensed	17%	56,665	
				Shelter care	0%	1,273	
				Licensed	0%	1,184	
				Unlicensed	0%	89	
				Therapeutic	9%	28,560	
				Licensed	7%	22,977	
				Unlicensed	2%	5,583	
				Group home	5%	14,973	
				Independent living	4%	14,821	
				Institution	3%	8,506	
				Juvenile justice	1%	2,187	
				Placed at home	4%	13,692	
				Residential care	4%	14,459	
				Runaway	1%	2,599	
				Whereabouts unknown	0%	912	
				Missing data	1%	1,679	

⁶ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children With a Permanency Plan for Adoption on September 30, 2025 (N=67,249)

Age on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 year	3%	2,071	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1,365
1-5 years	37%	24,555	Asian	0%	261
6-10 years	26%	17,596	Black or African American	24%	16,119
11-16 years	30%	19,944	Hispanic (of any race) ⁷	20%	13,688
17 years	3%	2,261	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	108
18-23 years	1%	822	Two or more races	10%	6,846
Permanency plan on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	White	41%	27,717
Adoption	100%	67,249	Abandoned/declined/unknown	2%	1,093
Guardianship	0%	0	Missing race/ethnicity	0%	52
Live with relative(s)	0%	0	Living arrangement on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number
Planned permanent living arrangement	0%	0	Non-relative	33%	22,461
Reunification	0%	0	Licensed	33%	22,110
Not yet established	0%	0	Unlicensed	1%	351
			Pre-adoptive	8%	5,550
			Licensed	7%	4,627
			Unlicensed	1%	923
			Relative or kin	35%	23,415
			Licensed	22%	14,920
			Unlicensed	13%	8,495
			Shelter care	0%	114
			Licensed	0%	104
			Unlicensed	0%	10
			Therapeutic	12%	7,769
			Licensed	10%	6,861
			Unlicensed	1%	908
			Group home	4%	2,690
			Independent living	0%	316
			Institution	2%	1,377
			Juvenile justice	0%	266
			Placed at home	0%	242
			Residential care	4%	2,554
			Runaway	0%	247
			Whereabouts unknown	0%	41
			Missing data	0%	207

⁷ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children Legally Free on September 30, 2025 (N=46,308)

Age on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 year	2%	705	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	889
1–5 years	30%	14,105	Asian	0%	196
6–10 years	23%	10,727	Black or African American	23%	10,683
11–16 years	32%	14,694	Hispanic (of any race) ⁸	20%	9,430
17 years	7%	3,052	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	85
18–23 years	7%	3,025	Two or more races	10%	4,859
Permanency plan on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number	White	42%	19,614
Adoption	69%	32,160	Abandoned/declined/unknown	1%	520
Guardianship	2%	1,048	Missing race/ethnicity	0%	32
Live with relative(s)	1%	282	Living arrangement on September 30, 2025	Percent	Number
Planned permanent living arrangement	8%	3,540	Non-relative	25%	11,732
Reunification	6%	2,551	Licensed	25%	11,566
Not yet established	15%	6,727	Unlicensed	0%	166
			Pre-adoptive	9%	4,228
			Licensed	8%	3,490
			Unlicensed	2%	738
			Relative or kin	32%	14,997
			Licensed	19%	8,972
			Unlicensed	13%	6,025
			Shelter care	0%	97
			Licensed	0%	88
			Unlicensed	0%	9
			Therapeutic	14%	6,660
			Licensed	10%	4,665
			Unlicensed	4%	1,995
			Group home	5%	2,356
			Independent living	3%	1,361
			Institution	2%	1,135
			Juvenile justice	1%	339
			Placed at home	0%	159
			Residential care	6%	2,756
			Runaway	1%	280
			Whereabouts unknown	0%	127
			Missing data	0%	81

⁸ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children Exiting Foster Care During FFY 2025 (N=169,927)

Age at exit	Percent	Number	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 year	4%	6,539	American Indian/Alaska Native	3%	4,358
1–5 years	35%	59,653	Asian	1%	1,007
6–10 years	23%	39,488	Black or African American	22%	37,341
11–16 years	23%	39,692	Hispanic (of any race) ⁹	21%	36,300
17 years	4%	6,560	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	419
18–23 years	11%	17,995	Two or more races	9%	15,032
Exit reason	Percent	Number	White	42%	72,170
Adoption	26%	43,380	Abandoned/declined/unknown	2%	2,891
Death of child	0%	317	Missing race/ethnicity	0%	409
Emancipation	9%	15,030	Living arrangement at exit	Percent	Number
Guardianship	10%	17,702	Non-relative	16%	26,663
Live with relative	6%	10,587	Licensed	15%	25,795
Reunification	46%	77,745	Unlicensed	1%	868
Runaway or whereabouts unknown	0%	643	Pre-adoptive	10%	17,058
Transfer to another agency	1%	1,936	Licensed	8%	13,189
Missing data	2%	2,587	Unlicensed	2%	3,869
Time to exit	Percent	Number	Relative or kin	38%	64,562
Less than 8 days	4%	7,040	Licensed	20%	34,112
8–30 days	3%	5,284	Unlicensed	18%	30,450
31–182 days	13%	21,385	Shelter care	0%	806
183–365 days	16%	27,535	Licensed	0%	732
1–1.5 years	16%	26,820	Unlicensed	0%	74
1.5–2 years	12%	21,035	Therapeutic	4%	6,627
2–3 years	16%	27,589	Licensed	3%	5,494
More than 3 years	20%	33,239	Unlicensed	1%	1,133
			Group home	3%	4,930
			Independent living	4%	6,680
			Institution	1%	2,369
			Juvenile justice	1%	1,325
			Placed at home	19%	32,230
			Residential care	2%	3,510
			Runaway	1%	1,826
			Whereabouts unknown	0%	487
			Missing data	1%	854

⁹ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children Exiting to Adoption During FFY 2025 (N=43,380)

Age at exit	Percent	Number	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 year	2%	786	American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	820
1-5 years	53%	22,847	Asian	0%	184
6-10 years	26%	11,296	Black or African American	18%	7,989
11-16 years	17%	7,500	Hispanic (of any race) ¹⁰	21%	8,897
17 years	2%	827	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	91
18-23 years	0%	124	Two or more races	10%	4,273
Time to adoption	Percent	Number	White	47%	20,336
Less than 8 days	-	< 10	Abandoned/declined/unknown	2%	737
8-30 days	-	< 10	Missing race/ethnicity	0%	53
31-182 days	0%	115	Living arrangement at adoption	Percent	Number
183-365 days	3%	1,423	Non-relative	16%	7,027
1-1.5 years	10%	4,326	Licensed	16%	6,817
1.5-2 years	16%	6,889	Unlicensed	0%	210
2-3 years	32%	13,904	Pre-adoptive	38%	16,420
More than 3 years	39%	16,713	Licensed	29%	12,584
Marital Status of the adoptive parent	Percent	Number	Unlicensed	9%	3,836
Married couple	56%	24,108	Relative or kin	39%	16,852
Unmarried couple	5%	2,143	Licensed	25%	10,822
Separated	1%	323	Unlicensed	14%	6,030
Single adult	28%	12,152	Shelter care	1%	234
Married but individual adoption/guardianship	1%	415	Licensed	1%	228
Missing data	10%	4,239	Unlicensed	0%	6
Child's relationship to the adoptive parent	Percent	Number	Therapeutic	6%	2,448
Relative	33%	14,259	Licensed	4%	1,826
Non-relative	6%	2,805	Unlicensed	1%	622
Foster Parent	42%	18,339	Group home	0%	51
Kin	10%	4,127	Independent living	-	>=10
Missing data	9%	3,850	Institution	0%	69
			Placed at home	0%	72
			Residential care	0%	84
			Runaway	-	< 10
			Whereabouts unknown	0%	18
			Missing data	0%	87

¹⁰ All races exclude children of Hispanic origin. Children of Hispanic ethnicity may be any race.

Children Exiting to Guardianship During FFY 2025 (N=17,702)

Age at exit	Percent	Number	Race/ethnicity	Percent	Number
Less than 1 year	2%	349	American Indian/Alaska Native	5%	835
1-5 years	28%	5,006	Asian	1%	92
6-10 years	26%	4,681	Black or African American	25%	4,404
11-16 years	36%	6,409	Hispanic (of any race) ¹¹	20%	3,511
17 years	6%	1,059	Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0%	57
18-23 years	1%	198	Two or more races	9%	1,596
Time to guardianship	Percent	Number	White	39%	6,979
Less than 8 days	1%	164	Abandoned/declined/unknown	1%	198
8-30 days	1%	167	Missing race/ethnicity	0%	30
31-182 days	6%	1,007	Living arrangement at exit	Percent	Number
183-365 days	14%	2,426	Non-relative	11%	1,998
1-1.5 years	22%	3,853	Licensed	11%	1,921
1.5-2 years	18%	3,184	Unlicensed	0%	77
2-3 years	21%	3,717	Pre-adoptive	1%	124
More than 3 years	18%	3,184	Licensed	1%	119
Marital Status of the guardian	Percent	Number	Unlicensed	0%	5
Married couple	23%	4,009	Relative or kin	82%	14,553
Unmarried couple	4%	782	Licensed	46%	8,130
Separated	1%	265	Unlicensed	36%	6,403
Single adult	31%	5,464	Shelter care	0%	75
Married but individual adoption/guardianship	2%	344	Licensed	0%	67
Missing data	39%	6,838	Unlicensed	0%	8
Child's relationship to the guardian	Percent	Number	Therapeutic	2%	307
Relative	38%	6,810	Licensed	2%	289
Non-relative	3%	522	Unlicensed	0%	18
Foster Parent	8%	1,474	Group home	1%	102
Kin	6%	1,090	Independent living	0%	17
Missing data	44%	7,806	Institution	1%	140
			Juvenile justice	-	>= 10
			Placed at home	1%	232
			Residential care	0%	60
			Runaway	0%	24
			Whereabouts unknown	-	< 10
			Missing data	0%	74

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