

National Foster Care Data¹

Number of children in foster care on Sept. 30, 2008	463,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in foster care on Sept. 30, 2007 	496,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in foster care on Sept. 30, 2006 	505,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in foster care on Sept. 30, 2005 	511,000
Total number of children in foster care during 2008 fiscal year (Oct. 2007-Sept. 2008)	748,000
Children in foster care who are children of color	58%
Children exiting foster care who had been in care for one year or more	53%
Children exiting foster care who had been in care for three years or more	17%
Average number of placement changes per stay	3.2 ³
Number of youth who emancipated from foster care during 2008 fiscal year	29,500

Compare to 44% of U.S. child population²

Results of Foster Care Studies

Children in foster care who have chronic medical problems	50% ⁴
Alumni (adults formerly in foster care) who experienced seven or more school changes (K-12)	65% ⁵
Alumni who completed high school	74% ⁶
Youth emancipating from foster care who plan to attend college	70% ⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni who completed a bachelor's degree 	3% - 11% ⁹
Alumni who were employed at age 21	52% ¹⁰
Alumni who became homeless for one day or more after emancipating from foster care	22% ⁵
Alumni of foster care who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder	25% ⁵

Compare to 84% in the general population ages 25 to 34⁷

Compare to 28% for 25- to 34-year-olds in the general population⁷

Compare to 66.6% employment rate for ages 20-24 in 2008¹¹

Compare to range of 2.6% to 6.8% for ages 18 to 24 who are homeless in U.S. in any given year¹²

This lifetime prevalence rate is similar to that of many U.S. war veterans



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- 1 Except where footnoted, data were taken from figures available from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Retrieved June 25, 2010 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends.htm and http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm
- 2 Data on child population by race for 2008 from the KIDS COUNT Data Center at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=103>. Retrieved June 25, 2010
- 3 National 2008 AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System) case level data indicate an average of 3.2 placements per child, with a median length of stay of 15.3 months in care (Personal Communication, Susan Smith, December 28, 2009). Note that the placement change rate is inflated by the large percentage of children who have a short-term shelter care placement before being placed in a regular foster home.
- 4 See Rubin, D., Halfon, N., Raghavan, R. & Rosenbaum, S. (2005). Protecting children in foster care: Why proposed Medicaid cuts harm our nation's most vulnerable children. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Also see:

Halfon N., Mendonca, A., & Berkowitz, G. (1995). Health status of children in foster care. The experience of the Center for the Vulnerable Child. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 149(4), 386-392.

Simms, M. D. (1989). The foster care clinic: A community program to identify treatment needs of children in foster care. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 10(3), 121-128.

Takayama, J. I., Wolfe, E., & Coulter, K. P. (1998). Relationship between reason for placement and medical findings among children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 101(2), 201-207.

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1995). Foster care: Health needs of many young children are unknown and unmet (GAO/HEHS-95-114). Washington, DC: Author.
- 5 Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., Hiripi, E., White, C. R., & Wiggins, T. (2005). Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. In terms of school changes, one-third of the alumni in another recent study had attended more than five elementary schools, averaging a change in schools nearly every year. See Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). Assessing the effects of foster care: Early results from the Casey National Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs, p. 28. Both studies can be downloaded from www.casey.org.
- 6 This statistic was derived by averaging the results of a representative set of foster care alumni studies that interviewed older alumni, who had more time to complete high school via a diploma or a GED, attend a post-secondary educational program, and/or complete a bachelor's degree than younger alumni. The studies were then weighted by study sample size so the larger studies carried more weight in the average. For more information contact Peter J. Pecora at ppecora@casey.org. Examples of studies included in the analysis for the high school completion rate include:

Blome, W. W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 14(1), p. 41-53.

Buehler, C., Orme, J. G., Post, J., & Patterson, D. A. (2000). The long-term correlates of family foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 22(8), 595-625.

Casey Family Services. (1999). The road to independence: Transitioning youth in foster care to independence. Shelton, CT: Author. (www.caseyfamilyservices.org)

Cook, R.; Fleishman, E., & Grimes, V. (1989). A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth (Phase 2 Final Report, Volume 1). Rockville: Westat, Inc.

Courtney, M., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Nesmith, A. (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care, *Child Welfare*, 80, 685-717.

Festinger, T. (1983). No one ever asked us... A postscript to foster care. New York: Columbia University.

Pecora, P. J., Kessler, R. C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A. C., English, D., White, C.R., Hiripi, E., Wiggins, T., & Holmes, K. (2005). Improving family foster care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Website: www.casey.org.

Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs. Website: www.casey.org.

Reilly, T. (2003). Transition from care: Status and outcomes of youth who age out of foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(6), 727-746.
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Educational Attainment by Sex: 2000. (Table QT-P20). http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPeople?_submenuid=people_5&_sse=on. Click on the "Educational Attainment" table. Note that a more conservative estimate of national high school completion rate of 70% has been published by Greene & Forster (2003). They believe that completion statistics are sometimes overstated because they underestimate dropouts, and because they exclude military personnel, prisoners and institutionalized populations. See Greene, J. P. & Forster, G. (2003). Public high school graduation and college readiness rates in the United States. New York: Center for Civic Innovation, Manhattan Institute.
- 8 McMillen, C., Auslander, W., Elze, D., White, T., & Thompson, R. (2003). Educational experiences and aspirations of older youth in foster care. *Child Welfare*, 82(4), 475-495.
- 9 According to a weighted average of foster care alumni studies (see reference note 6), the college completion rate was 3%. College completion rates, however, are higher when follow-up studies include older adults. For example, the college completion rate was three times greater (at 10.8%) in a recent study of foster care alumni who were served by a voluntary child welfare agency (and who were ages 25 and older). See Pecora, P. J., Williams, J., Kessler, R. C., Downs, A. C., O'Brien, K., Hiripi, E., & Morello, S. (2003). Assessing the Effects of Foster Care: Early Results from the Casey National Alumni Study. Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs, p. 28.
- 10 Courtney, M. E., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G. R., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., Perez, A., et al. (2007). Midwest evaluation of adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 21. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.
- 11 This figure was calculated from Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009). Table 3. Employment status by race, age, sex, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2008 annual averages. Downloaded July 7, 2010 from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wftable3.htm>
- 12 Ammerman, S.D., Ensign, J., Kirzner, R., Meininger, E.T., Tornabene, M., Warf, C.W., Zenger, S., & Post, P. Homeless Young Adults Ages 18–24: Examining Service Delivery Adaptations. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc., 2004.

U.S. Census Bureau (2004). Estimates of the Resident Population by Selected Age Groups for the United States and States and for Puerto Rico: July 1, 2004 (SC-EST2004-01RES). Downloaded July 7, 2010 from <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/SC-est2004-01.html>