

Sevita Blog

72 Foster Care Statistics for 2025

Written by [Sevita](#) | Feb 5, 2025 12:44:10 PM

[Foster care](#) is important for children in need. No matter their situation, it allows children to grow up in a loving and caring environment.

To understand the true state of foster care, it's important to look at the facts. Stats can show how important foster care is and the impact it has on children everywhere.

Such information also helps organizations understand how to provide the best possible care to children in need and provide answers to [common questions](#) about foster care.

Here are 72 foster care statistics for 2024.

How Many Kids Are in Foster Care?

Current statistics show there are 390,000 children in foster care in the United States. However, the number of kids in foster care changes all the time.

Some children stay in foster care for just a short while, while others might be there for years. The goal is always to find the best solution for each child, whether that's going back to their family or finding a new forever home.

Think about it: each number represents a child with their own story. These are real kids who, for different reasons, can't live with their families right now.

They come from all kinds of backgrounds and various ages — from tiny babies to [teenagers](#) about to [become adults](#).

Foster parents play a crucial role in providing a safe and loving environment for these children.

- There are over 390,000 children in foster care. ([Child Welfare Information Gateway](#))
- This number shifts significantly year to year — in 2018, it was as high as 437,000 children. ([Statista](#))
- Of those children, the average age is around eight years old. ([AdoptUSKids](#))
- Genders are almost evenly split — 51% are boys, and 49% are girls. ([AFCARS Report](#))
- Children in care come from many different age groups, from infants to young adults at 20 years old. ([Kids Count Data Center](#))

As Elizabeth Murrell, a foster parent from Maryland, beautifully expresses in her letter to her child in care:

"We want you to feel safe and loved in our home. We understand that this may be a new and unfamiliar environment for you, but please know that we are here to support you every step of the way."

Knowing how many kids are in foster care reveals how many loving homes and caring adults are needed to step up and help. It also reminds us why it's so important to support families and try to keep them together when it's safe to do so.

Foster Care Statistics by Race

Foster care helps children from all demographics lead a fulfilling life with love and care. Here are some foster care statistics concerning race and demographics, courtesy of the [AFCARS Report](#).

- 22% of children in care are Hispanic
- 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 1% are Asian
- 22% are Black or African American

- 43% are White
- 8% are Multiracial
- Around one-third of all children in care are living with some kind of disability (Children's Rights)
- Around 30% of children in care identify as LGBTQ+ (Human Rights Campaign Foundation)

Number of Children in Care by State

The number of children in care varies greatly by state — we'll list some of the more prominent ones to show the differences. These stats are courtesy of [The Imprint](#).

Here are the 10 states with the most children in foster care as of 2022:

- California: 46,214
- Florida: 21,808
- Texas: 21,691
- Illinois: 20,815
- Ohio: 15,032
- New York: 14,489
- Missouri: 14,014
- Arizona: 13,012
- Pennsylvania: 12,930
- Georgia: 11,390

Compare these to some with far fewer children in foster care:

- Wyoming has 917
- Washington, D.C. has 603
- Delaware has the fewest children in foster care with just 427

Statistics on Kids Aging Out of Foster Care

Unfortunately, in some cases, children in care “age out” of foster care — in other words, they aren't reunited with their family or matched with an adoptive family.

Here are some of those findings:

- Over 19,000 children aged out of foster care as recently as 2021. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- Between 31% and 46% of youth exiting foster care will end up homeless by the age of 26. (National Alliance to End Homelessness)
- Only 1 of every 2 kids in care who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24. (Social Work Today)
- Unfortunately, around 50% of children in foster care will deal with the juvenile legal system. (Crim Law Practitioner)
 - Similarly, around 25% of kids in care will deal with the criminal legal system within two years of exiting foster care.
- 7 out of 10 girls who age out of foster care end up becoming pregnant by 21 years old. (FosterVA)
- Less than 3% of kids who age out of foster care earn a college degree. (House of Providence)
- 1 in 4 children who age out of foster care end up experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (Sunnybrook)

Foster Care Mental Health and Well-Being Statistics

When kids enter foster care, they often bring more than just a suitcase.

Many carry invisible burdens — memories of tough times, worries about the future, and sometimes health issues we can't see from the outside. Some may also require therapeutic care.

It's important that we pay attention to how these children are doing, both in body and mind.

- Around 41% of children in care have some sort of mental health diagnosis. (National Library of Medicine)
- Around 90% of children in care have experienced trauma in their lifetime, whether physical, emotional, or other forms. (International Journal of Mental Health Systems)

- Kids in foster care are three times more likely to have an ADHD diagnosis. (ScienceDaily)
- Children in care are twice as likely to have developmental delays. (Mental Health First Aid)

How Long Do Children Remain in Foster Care?

The goal of foster care is to reunite children with their families, if possible. If not, then [foster care adoption](#) is a potential solution.

Here are some stats on the length of foster care, provided by the [AFCARS Report](#):

- 4% stay for less than a month
- 19% stay for 1-5 months
- 19% stay for 6-11 months
- 14% stay for 12-17 months
- 12% stay for 18-23 months
- 9% stay for 24-29 months
- 6% stay for 30-35 months
- 12% stay for 3-4 years
- 6% stay for 5 years or more
- On average, children stay in foster care for just over 21 months
- Additionally, the average number of placements for a child in care is two. (National Institute of Health)
- However, over one-third of children in care have more than three placements. (Christian Alliance For Orphans)

Foster Care Adoption Statistics

In cases where reuniting a child with their biological parents isn't possible, the goal is to find an adoptive family.

- There were 54,240 children adopted from foster care in 2021. This number is down 6% from 2020, and 18% from 2019. (National Council For Adoption)
 - Of those, 55% were adopted by their foster parents. (CCAI)
 - 34% were adopted by a relative.

- 29% were 9 years old or older.
- There are 114,000 children in foster care eligible for adoption. (Adoption Network)
- Around 25% of children cannot be reunited with their birth parents. (Creating a Family)
- 60% of children awaiting adoption have spent more than two years in foster care. (Adoption Council)

How Many Licensed Foster Homes Are Out There?

Foster care can't work without selfless people volunteering to provide love and care. Becoming a foster parent is no small feat, and children in care need them to lead fulfilling lives and thrive in the future.

- As of 2020, there were 214,421 licensed foster homes in the US. (Foster VA)
- Of the 50 states, California has the most licensed foster homes, with 37,870 as of 2022. (The Imprint)
- Conversely, Delaware has the least, with just 397.
- Around 32% of foster parents are single. (The Forgotten Initiative)
- Over 2.4 million children are in kinship care in the US. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- On average, it takes between 3-6 months to become a foster parent. However, this may vary depending on the organization you choose. (FosterUSKids)

Foster Care Education Statistics

In many cases, being in foster care can affect the education of a child. Here's what the statistics say about foster care education.

- Only 3-4% of children in care obtain a four-year degree. (NFYI)
- Between 2-6% of children in care obtain a two-year degree. (Blue Cross NC)
- Only 50% of children in care complete high school. (Foster Youth of America)
- Over 40% of children in care experience educational difficulties. (Set to Thrive)
- Around one-third of older children in care change schools 5 or more times. (Education Law Center)

- Children in care often struggle to graduate high school on time — 9 different states reported that less than 50% graduated in 4 years. ([FREOPP](#))

Providing support that allows children to focus on their education is important. Helping them overcome these barriers and thrive in the future is part of being an amazing foster parent!

Family Connections in Foster Care

The bonds of family play a crucial role in a child's development and well-being, especially when that child is in foster care.

While the primary goal of foster care is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children who cannot live with their biological parents, maintaining and nurturing family connections remains a priority.

- Between 65% and 85% of children in care have a sibling who is also in care. ([Christian Alliance For Orphans](#))
- Anywhere from 50% to 85% of children in care have a visitation agreement with their biological parents. ([Science Direct](#))
- Around 52% of adoptions are by a child's foster parents. ([Considering Adoption](#))

Get Answers to All Your Fostering Questions

These statistics show just how important foster parents are to the many children in need.

So, if you're ready to take a step forward and make a difference, why not get the answers to your foster parenting questions?

The Foster Parent Information Webinar can give you step-by-step guidance, covering the process of becoming a foster parent, the importance of foster parents, who can foster, and what support is available to you.

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