



The State of Child Welfare in America: 2009

In terms of physical and emotional suffering, an estimated 905,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect in 2006 according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.¹ From the fiscal perspective, Prevent Child Abuse America has estimated that child abuse and neglect in the U.S. costs over \$284 million dollars per day.²

Child Abuse and Neglect

- In 2006, of children who were victims of abuse, 64% experienced neglect; 16% were physically abused; 9% were sexually abused; 7% were emotionally maltreated; and 2% were medically neglected.¹
- Children ages birth to 1 year have the highest rate of child abuse and neglect at 24.4 per 1,000 children.¹
- In 2006, 18.5 per 100,000 male infants and 14.7 per 100,000 female infants died as a result of abuse.¹
- The age ranges of victims of abuse per 1,000 children are as follows: birth to 1 year, 24.4; 1 to 3 years, 14.2; 4 to 7 years, 13.5; 8 to 11 years, 10.8; 12 to 15 years, 10.2; and, 16 to 17 years, 6.3.¹
- The majority of child abuse and neglect victims are harmed by their parents: 39.9% by their mother; 17.8% by their mother and father; 17.6% by their father; 10% by a non-parent; 7.6% by unknown or missing perpetrator; 6.1% by mother and another person; and 1% by father and another person.¹
- Pacific Islander, African-American, and American Indian or Alaska Native children have the highest rates of victimizations per capita. The rate of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children for African-Americans is 19.8; American Indian or Alaska Natives, 15.9; Multiple Race, 15.4; Pacific Islanders, 14.3; Hispanic, 10.8; White, 10.7; Asian, 2.5.¹
- In 2006, an estimated 1,530 children died due to abuse or neglect. More than three-quarters (78%) of children who were killed were younger than 4 years old; 11.9% were 4 to 7 years old; 4.8% were 8 to 11 years old; and 5.4% were 12 to 17 years old.¹
- Children with special needs are more likely to be abused or neglected; the incidence rate is 35.5 per 1,000 for children with special needs as compared to 21.3 per 1,000 for children without special needs.³
- Children under 3 who have been maltreated are at a considerably higher risk of later experiencing developmental problems when compared to those who do not experience maltreatment.⁴

Foster Care

- In 2006, there were 509,000 children in foster care in the U.S.⁵
- The mean age of children in foster care is 9.8 years; the average stay in foster care is 28.6 months.⁶
- The majority (60%) of children enter foster care because of abuse and/or neglect, while 17% enter foster care because of the absence of their parents due to illness, death, disability, incarceration, or other problems. Other reasons for entering care include: delinquent behavior (10%), a juvenile offense such as truancy or running away (5%); and a disability or the lack of access to care for their disability (5%).⁷
- Children of color represent approximately one third of the U.S. population⁸ and 60% of children in foster care.⁶
- African American children represent 15% of the child population under the age of 18⁸ and 32% of children in foster care.⁶
- In 2006, an estimated 289,000 children exited foster care. Of those children who exited, 15% had been in care less than 1 month, 16% for 1 to 5 months, 18% for 6 to 11 months, 23% for 1 to 2 years, 12% for 2 to 3 years, 9% for 3 to 4 years, and 7% for 5 or more years.⁶
- Reunification with parents is the most common permanency goal for children in foster care (53%), while long-term foster care is the permanency goal for 9%.⁶
- In 2006, 53% of those exiting the foster care system were reunified with their parents.⁶

- Thirty-three percent of those leaving foster care and returning to their parents re-enter the foster care system within three years.⁹
- In 2005, 24,000 children “aged out” of foster care. During this transition to adulthood, these youth who have aged out have no permanent home, which often leads to high unemployment or unstable employment and low wages.¹⁰
- An estimated 30-50% of foster parents leave the system each year.⁷

Adoption

- Adoption is the permanency goal for 23% of the children in foster care.⁶
- Annually, parents of 79,000 children in America have their parental rights terminated.⁶
- In 2006, 17% of the 289,000 children who exited foster care were adopted; 53% were reunified with parents or primary caretakers; 11% moved in with other relatives; 9% were emancipated; 5% went into a guardianship; and 4% had other arrangements.⁶
- Of 51,000 children who were adopted in 2006, 34,278 were adopted by married couples (69%) and 13,370 were adopted by single females (26%). The remaining 5% of children were adopted by single males and unmarried couples.⁶

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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. (2008). *Child Maltreatment 2006*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

² Prevent Child Abuse America. (2008). *Time for reform: Investing in prevention, keeping children safe at home*. Retrieved February 14, 2008, from [Hhttp://www.preventchildabuse.org/about_us/press_room.shtml](http://www.preventchildabuse.org/about_us/press_room.shtml)

³ Kendall, K. (2002). Abuse and neglect of children with disabilities. *Rehabilitation Psychology News*, 29, 12-13.

⁴ Barth, R. P., Scarborough, A., Lloyd, E. C., Losby, J., Casanueva, C., & Mann, T. (2007). Developmental status and early intervention service needs of maltreated children. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *Trends in foster care and adoption*. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from [Hhttp://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends.htm)

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration of Children, Youth and Families, and Children’s Bureau. (2008). *The AFCARS report: Preliminary FY 2006 estimates*. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from [Hhttp://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm)

⁷ Badeau, S., & Gesiriech, S. (2003). *A child’s journey through the child welfare system*. Washington, DC: Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care.

⁸ Anne E. Casey Foundation. (2006). *2000 Census data: Profile by race for the United States*. Retrieved January 7, 2009 from [Hhttp://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/aecensus.cgi?action=profileresults&area=00N&arearent=00N&printerfriendly=0§ion=0](http://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/aecensus.cgi?action=profileresults&area=00N&arearent=00N&printerfriendly=0§ion=0)

⁹ Perex, A., O’Neil, K., & Gesiriech, S. (2003). *Demographics of children in foster care*. Washington, DC: Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *Coming of age: Employment outcomes for youth who age out of foster care through their middle twenties*. Retrieved January 17, 2009 from [Hhttp://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/fosteremp/report.pdf](http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/fosteremp/report.pdf)

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