

# Foster Care: The Facts

## Age/Gender

Nearly half of the children in foster care are over the age of 10. The average age is 10.2 years. There are slightly more boys than girls in out-of-home care. (Male: 53%) (Female: 47%)

## Race/Ethnicity

As a percentage, there are more children of color in the foster care system than in the general U.S. population. However, child abuse and neglect occur at about the same rate in all racial/ethnic groups.

## Length of Stay

For the children in foster care on September 30, 2004, the average amount of time they had been in the system was 30 months. 29% of children leaving care in 2004 had been away from home for a year or longer. 53% of the young people leaving the system were reunified with their birth parents or primary caregivers.

## Siblings and Extended Families

Over 2 million American children live with grandparents or other relatives because their parents cannot care for them. When relatives provide foster care (known as kinship care), siblings can often stay together. Kinship care also improves stability by keeping displaced children closer to their extended families, their neighborhoods, and their schools.

## Youth in Transition

Each year, an estimated 20,000 young people "age out" of the U.S. foster care system. Many are only 18 years old and still need support and services.

Several foster care alumni studies show that without a lifelong connection to a caring adult, these older youth are often left vulnerable to a host of adverse situations:

- 54% had earned their high school diploma
- 2% obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher
- 84% became a parent
- 51% were unemployed
- 30% had no health insurance
- 25% had been homeless
- 30% were receiving public assistance



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