

WHO CARES

A National Count of Foster Homes and Families

November 2020



The
Imprint

ImprintNews.org

The Imprint

YOUTH & FAMILY NEWS

The Imprint is a daily news publication dedicated to rigorous, in-depth journalism focused on families and the systems that impact their lives. Founded in 2013, our work focuses on the nation's child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as housing, economic, mental health and educational issues faced by vulnerable children and families.



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SPEAKERS

John Kelly

Senior Editor, The Imprint

Melissa Carter

Executive Director of the Barton Child Law and Policy
Center at Emory University

Andy Barclay

Statistician, Fostering Court Improvement

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

1. Who Cares Background & Methodology
2. Key Findings
3. New Measure: Family Separation
4. Questions?



BACKGROUND

Who Cares? An Annual Data Collection Project

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, *The Imprint* has been working to build the nation's first public resource on foster care capacity. We collect data directly from each state, and combine that with specially obtained federal reports to shed light on some critical questions.

DRIVING QUESTIONS

- How many children and youth are in foster care today?
- Who are they?
- And where and with whom are they living?



METHODOLOGY

Who Cares? An Annual Data Collection Project

SCOPE

Over the years, our scope has widened in the hopes of gaining a long-term picture of total state capacity when it comes to foster care. We ask that states provide responses to the questions below for March 31, or the closest possible point in time.

DATA POINTS

- Total licensed homes
- Non-relative foster homes
- Relatives with an active, ongoing placement of youth in their homes
- The number of congregate care providers that take placements of foster youth, and the number of total beds available in them
- The number of children in foster care placements of any kind



METHODOLOGY

Who Cares? An Annual Data Collection Project

FEDERAL DATA

We work with professional researchers to acquire and aggregate data collected through the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

While this data does lag behind present day by more than a year, it allows us to provide numbers on the demographics of both foster parents and foster youth, and trends in the number of youth living in each type of foster care setting.



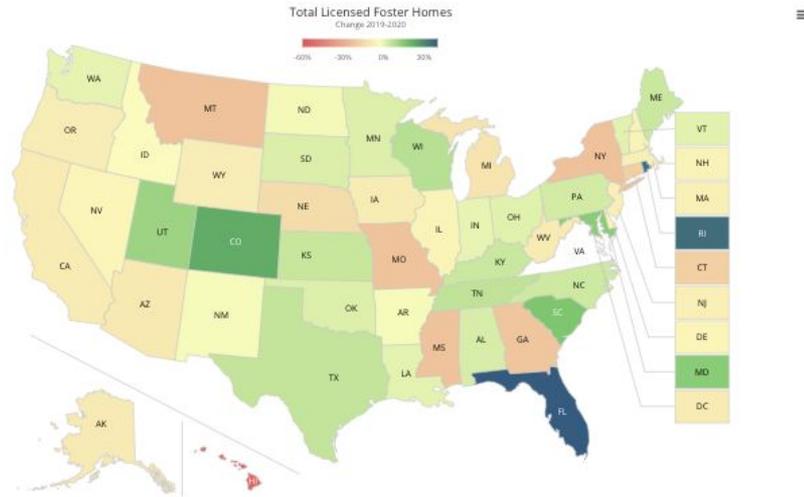
WHO CARES:

A National Count of Foster Homes and Families

Who Cares is the nation's first public resource on foster care capacity. *The Imprint* collects data directly from each state, and combines that with specially obtained federal reports to shed light on two critical questions:

How many kids are in foster care today? And where are they living?

This year the data suggests that nationwide, the number of youth in care is going down, and so is the number of licensed foster homes. Across the nation, the reliance on relatives continues to grow in many systems as the use of group homes and residential care declines.



WHO CARES:

A National Count of Foster Homes and Families

DATA

The information collected through this data project was collected from direct information requests to state child welfare agencies, and through the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).



Total Licensed Foster Homes

2019-2020



Non-Relative Homes

2012-2020



Youth in Care

2010-2020



Family Separation

2010-2019



**Foster Youth Living in Congregate
Care**

2010-2019



Foster Youth Living With Relatives

2010-2019

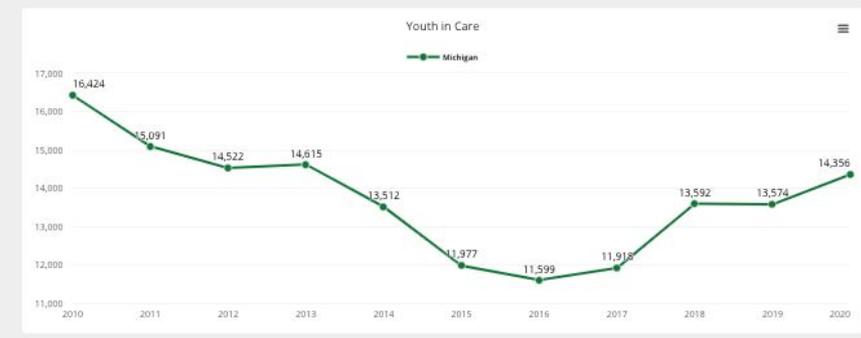
Click + to see charts

Foster care capacity*

Collected by The Imprint

- Youth in Care

The number of youth in foster care. (Note: Most recent year displayed collected from states by The Imprint).



+ Total Licensed Foster Homes

The total number of licensed foster homes in state.

2018	2019	2020
6,243	6,346	5,690

+ Non-Relative Homes

The number of foster homes that are not licensed to care for specific child(ren).

2017	2018	2019	2020
4,867	5,018	4,989	4,693

+ Relatives With Active Placements

Number of relatives with an active and ongoing placement of a youth.

2018	2019	2020
2,830	2,877	2,843

+ Family Separation

Average days per year a child spends without family (among all children in state).

2010	2015	2018	2019
1.1 1 Natl. avg.	1.1 1.2 Natl. avg.	1 1.1 Natl. avg.	0.9 1.1 Natl. avg.



EXPANDED STATE DATA VIEW



Switch state ▾

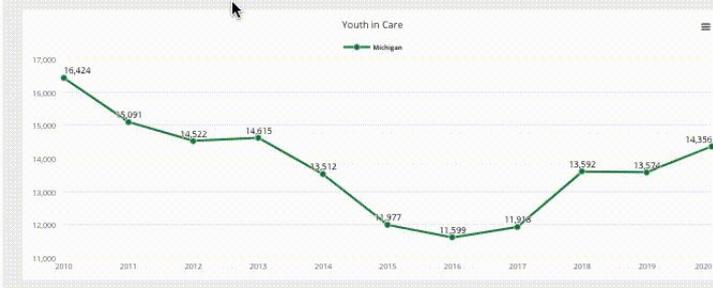
Click + to see charts

Foster care capacity*

Collected by The Impact

Youth in Care

The number of youth in foster care. (Note: Most recent year displayed collected from states by The Impact.)



+ Total Licensed Foster Homes

The total number of licensed foster homes in state.

Year	2018	2019	2020
Total Licensed Foster Homes	6,243	6,346	5,690

+ Non-Relative Homes

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Year	2018	2019	2020
Relatives With Active Placements	2,830	2,877	2,843

+ Family Separation

Average days per year a child spends without family (among all children in state).

Year	2010	2015	2018	2019
Family Separation	1.1 <small>1.1 Natl. avg.</small>	1.1 <small>1.2 Natl. avg.</small>	1 <small>1.1 Natl. avg.</small>	0.9 <small>1.1 Natl. avg.</small>

Foster care demographics

From Federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS)

+ Foster Youth Living With Relatives as Percent of All Youth in Care

Year	2010	2015	2018	2019
Foster Youth Living With Relatives as Percent of All Youth in Care	33% <small>26% Natl. avg.</small>	33% <small>28% Natl. avg.</small>	38% <small>31% Natl. avg.</small>	39% <small>31% Natl. avg.</small>





FINDINGS

Number of Youth in Care Declining

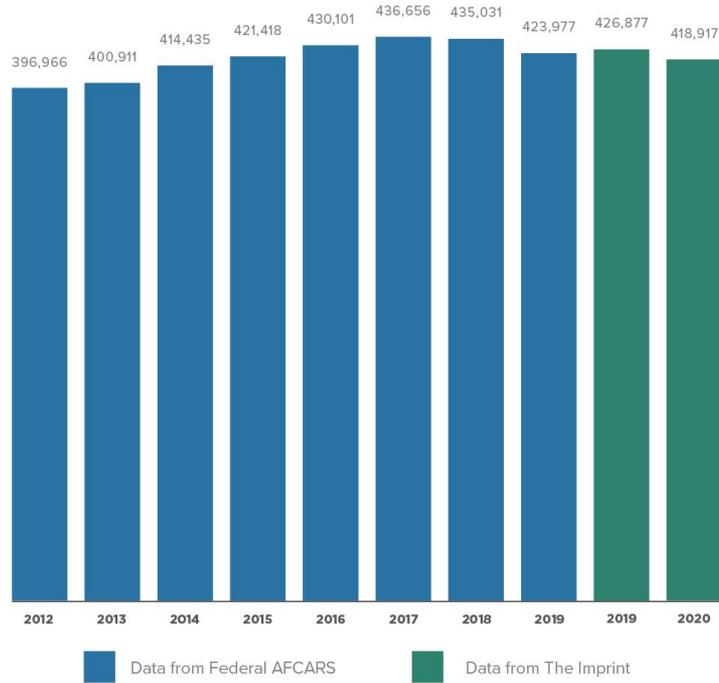
Data collected directly from states shows that the national total has declined for a third straight year

Our 2020 count has the total number of youth in care at 418,917, a 4% decrease from the recent peak of nearly 436,656 in 2017

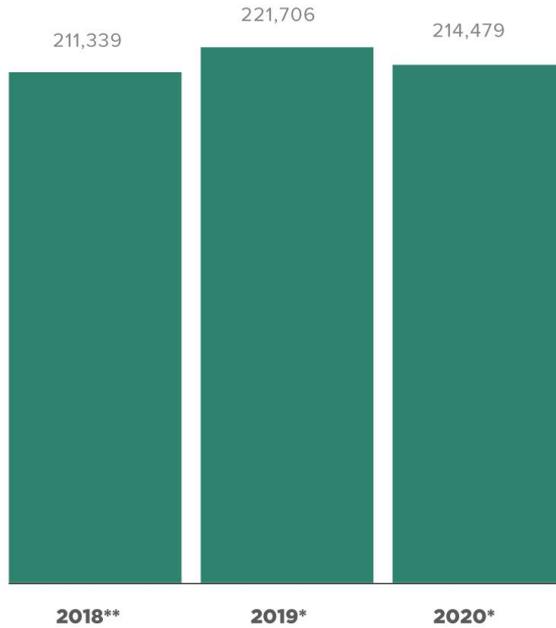
2020 figure captured at start of coronavirus pandemic



YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE



TOTAL LICENSED FOSTER HOMES



* Excludes: Virginia

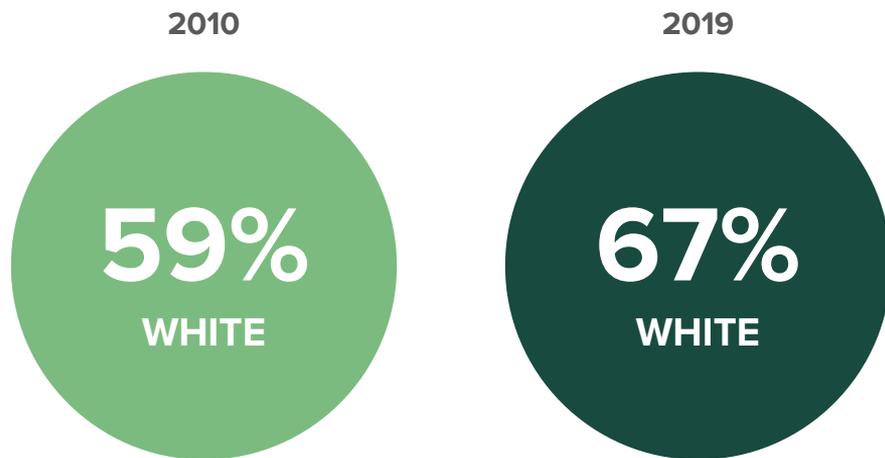
** Excludes: Delaware, Virginia

Source: Who Cares state data collection



FINDINGS

Foster Care Gets Less White



Source: AFCARS



FOSTER YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

States with decreased share of white youth, increased share of Black youth in 2019

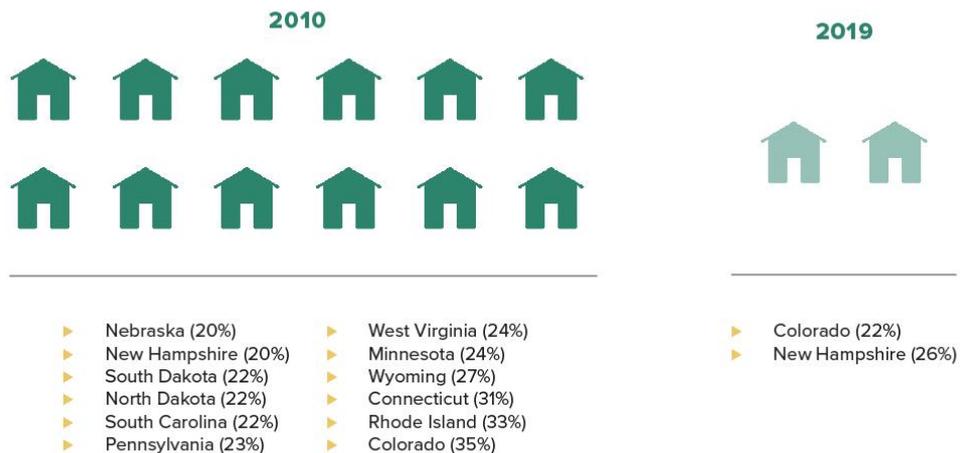


Source: AFCARS



HIGH CONGREGATE CARE USAGE

States where more than 20% of youth live in group homes or institutions





Family Separation





“What if we instead made our metric – our child protection bottom-line, if you will – maximizing the time that all kids spend safely in a family: birth, relative, kin or adoptive?”

Andy Barclay and Melissa Carter

Quote from Imprint op-ed in October 2018 entitled: “We Want Kids to Grow Up in Safe Families. So Let’s Measure That.”

What is Family Separation?

Average number of days per year any child spends living outside family (among all children in state).

“Family” includes: Parents, relatives, kin, adoptive families.

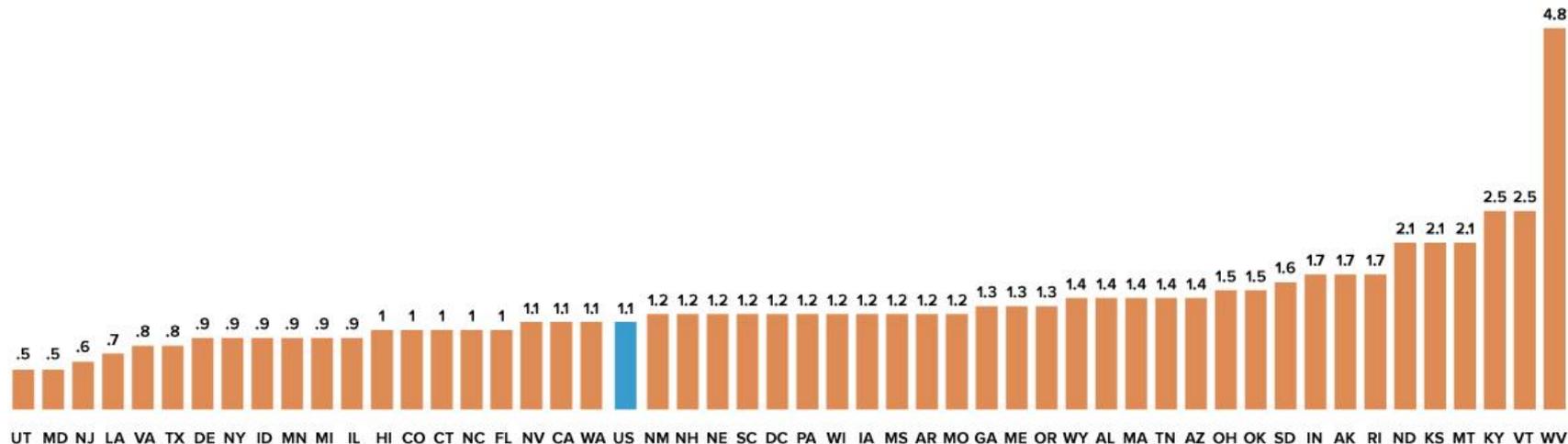
SOURCES

AFCARS, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.



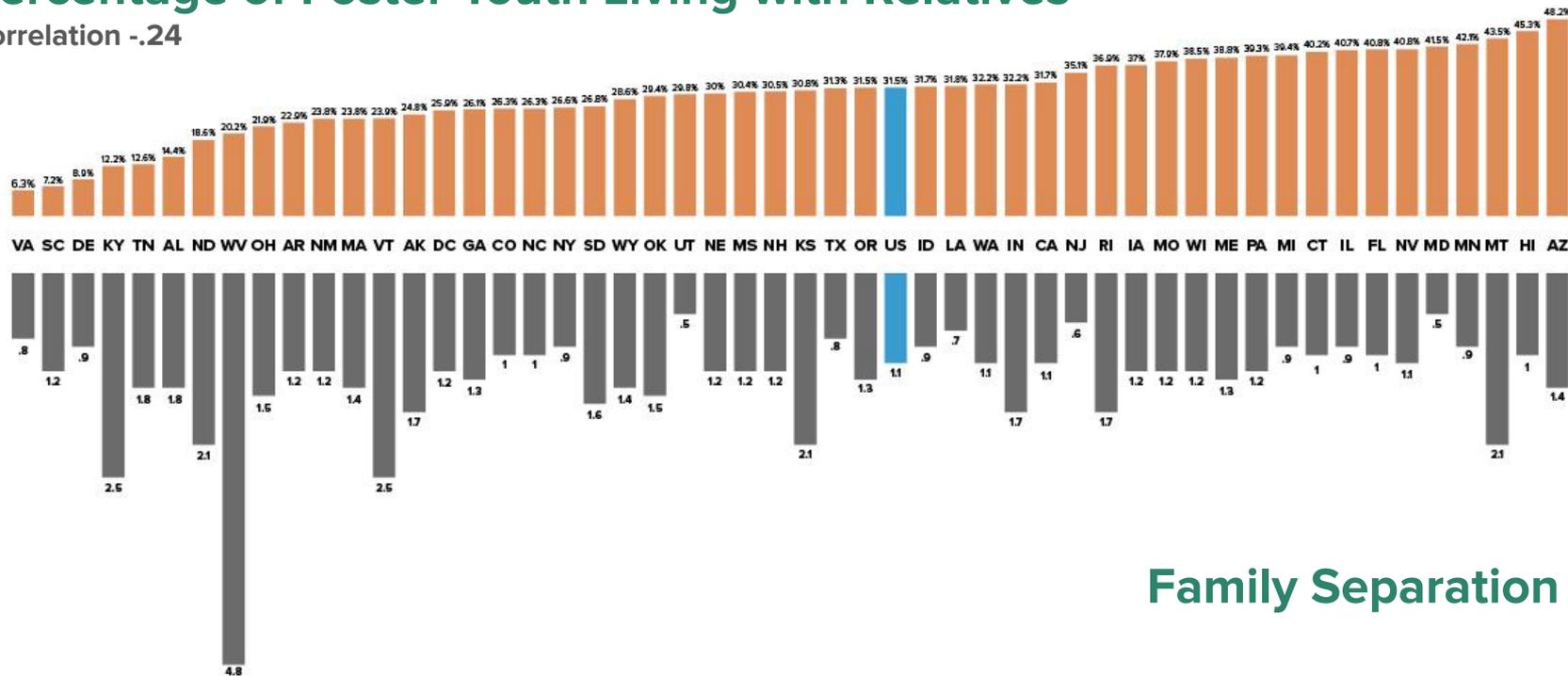
Family Separation

Range: .5 - 4.8



Percentage of Foster Youth Living with Relatives

Correlation -.24

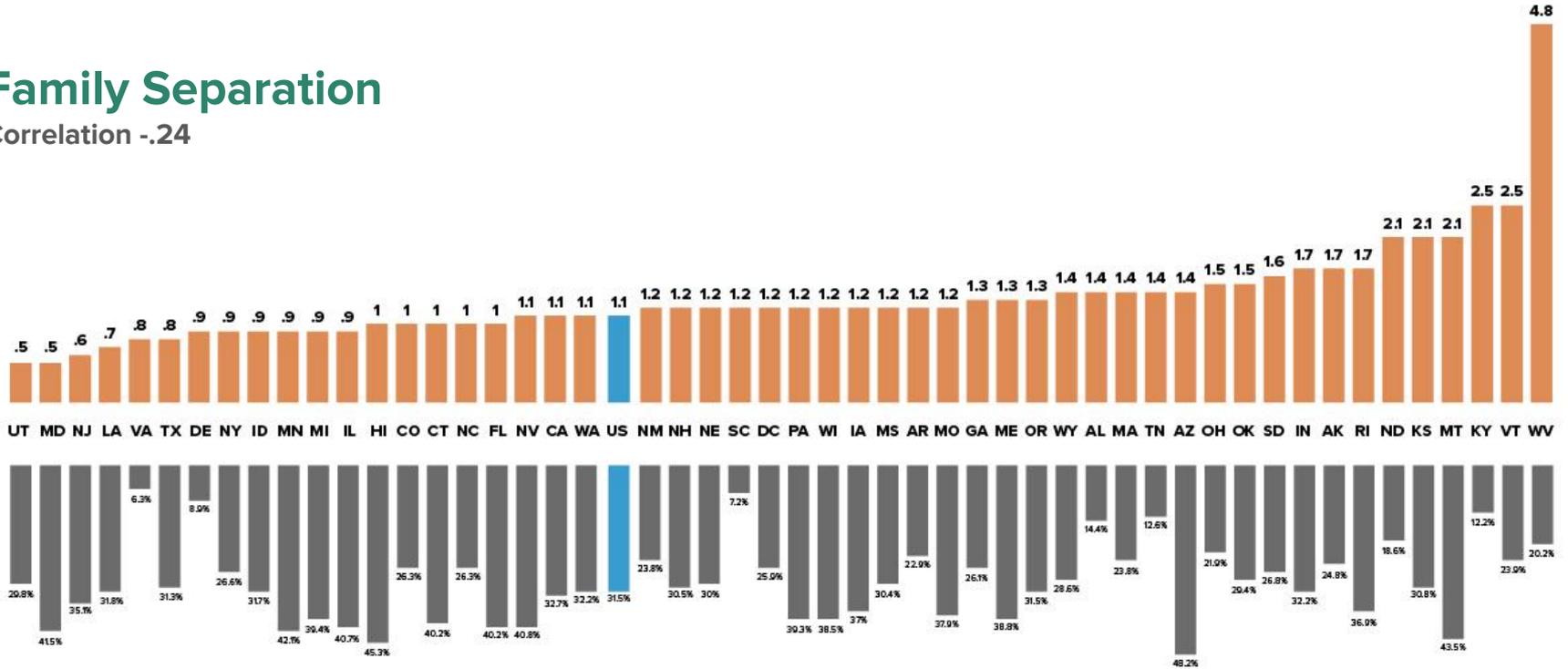


Family Separation



Family Separation

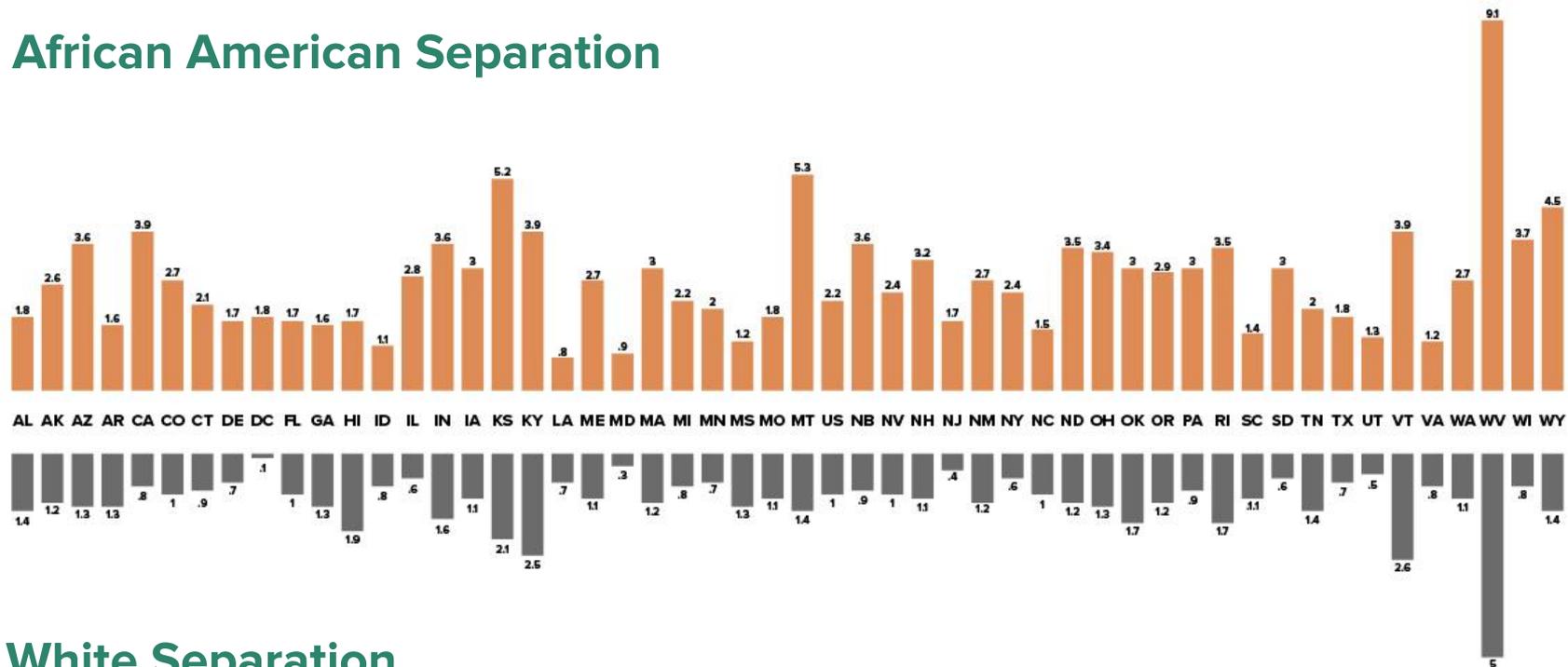
Correlation -.24



Percentage of Foster Youth Living with Relatives



African American Separation

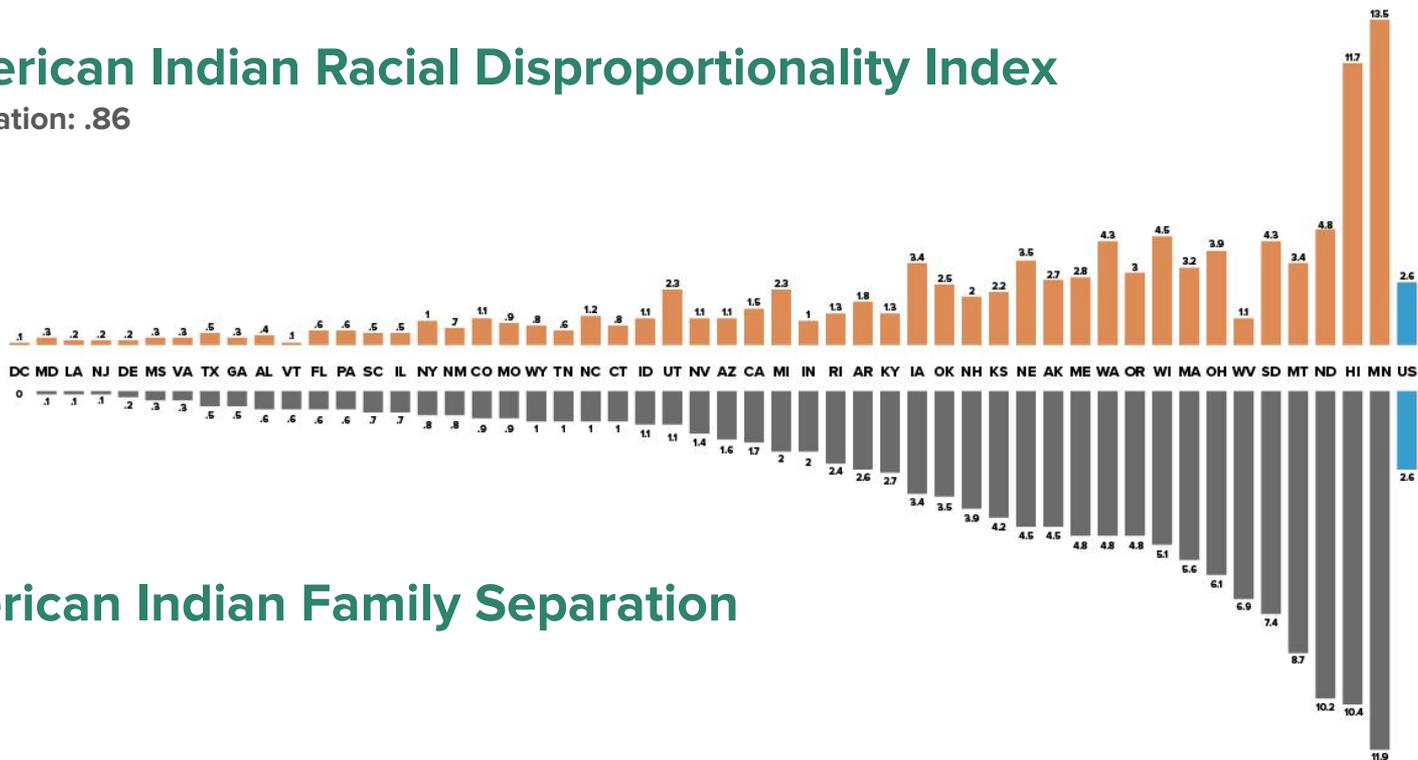


White Separation



American Indian Racial Disproportionality Index

Correlation: .86

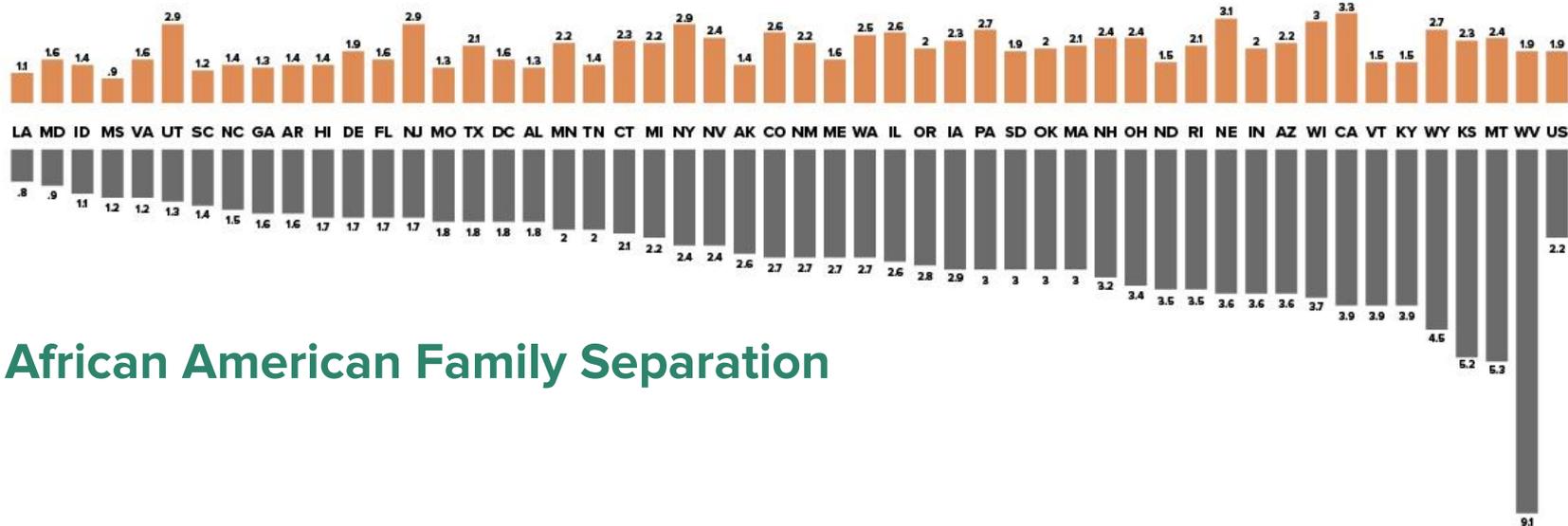


American Indian Family Separation



African American Racial Disproportionality Index

Correlation: .34



African American Family Separation



Questions? We Want to Hear From You!

What are your questions about foster care capacity?
What is being discussed in your state or county?



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Q & A

Defining the Data

FIRST THING THAT IMMEDIATELY COMES TO MIND IS HOW COOPERATIVE EACH STATE IS WHEN YOU ARE COLLECTING DATA. CAN YOU TRUST ALL OF THE STATE DATA?

Answer

HOW DO YOU DEFINE CONGREGATE CARE?

Answer



Q & A

Defining the Data

RE: THE RACE DEMOGRAPHICS, ARE THEY POPULATION-BASED RATES?

Answer

I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED ABOUT THIS FAMILY SEPARATION NUMBER. I'M IN MARYLAND, AND WE ARE TOWARD THE BOTTOM OF ALL STATES IN TIME-TO PERMANENCY. BUT THIS SHOWS US ALMOST AT THE LOWEST IN FAMILY SEPARATION. HOW COULD THOSE BOTH BE THE CASE?

Answer



Q & A

Defining the Data

FOR WHOM ARE YOU COUNTING THE NUMBER OF DAYS IN FOSTER CARE? (ANY CHILD WHO ENTERED NONRELATIVE FOSTER CARE IN A GIVEN YEAR, ANY CHILD WHO SPENT ANY TIME IN NONRELATIVE FOSTER CARE DURING A GIVEN YEAR ETC.)

Answer

DO YOU SEE ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS MEASURE AND THE LIKELIHOOD TO BE SUED? SEEMS ALMOST LIKE THE BEST SYSTEMS ON THIS MEASURE ARE UNDER CONSENT DECREE.

Answer



Q & A

Defining the Data

CONSIDER A HYPOTHETICAL: STATE X AND STATE Y HAVE THE SAME TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN. EACH STATE HAS THE SAME NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE FOR THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR YOU ARE MEASURING. OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR, STATE X TAKES AWAY 200 CHILDREN AND HOLDS THEM IN CARE FOR AN AVERAGE OF TEN DAYS EACH. STATE Y TAKES AWAY 10 CHILDREN BUT HOLDS THEM IN CARE FOR AN AVERAGE OF 200 DAYS EACH.

DOES THIS MEAN THAT, BY YOUR MEASUREMENT, THESE STATES APPEAR THE SAME, EVEN THOUGH SHORT STAYS ARE TRAUMATIC, AND STATE X HAS DISRUPTED THE LIVES OF FAR MORE CHILDREN THAN STATE Y?

Answer

IS A HIGH % OF SHORT STAYERS IN FOSTER CARE CONCERNING? AND HOW DOES THAT FACTOR INTO THIS DATA?

Answer



Q & A

Defining the Data

I'M STRUGGLING WITH THE DEFINITION OF "FAMILY INTEGRITY" AS EXISTING WHEN A CHILD IS REMOVED FROM THEIR ORIGINAL PARENTS AND PLACED INTO ANOTHER FAMILY UNIT (RELATIVE, KIN, ADOPTIVE, ETC.). WOULD THAT ACTUALLY BE VIEWED AS FAMILY INTEGRITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CHILD? THEY ARE SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILY.... THAT, IN AND ITSELF, CANNOT BE DIMINISHED BY PLACING THEM IN A NEW FAMILY UNIT, EVEN IF THEY ARE RELATIVES.

Answer

WHO IS LOOKING CLOSELY AT THE IMPACT OF FAMILY SEPARATIONS AT THE BORDER, INCLUDING THOSE CHILDREN WHO END UP IN THE CARE OF LOCAL CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES?

Answer



Q & A

Questions About Stories

WHERE IS THE OP-ED FROM ANDY AND MELISSA?

You can find [the Op-Ed referenced here](#). This Op-Ed was written in 2018, and helped launch a partnership to work on the data between The Imprint and Andy and Melissa.

WHAT IS LOUISIANA DOING DIFFERENTLY?

In New Orleans, Judge Ernestine Gray has done a lot of work approaching foster care cases that is partly reflected in this state. Here is a [Washington Post story profiling her](#) and an [Imprint Op-Ed on her approach](#).

