# DISPROPORTIONALITY: DEFINITIONS AND DATA

## What is Disproportionality?

Disproportionality is defined as the level at which groups of children are present in the child welfare system at higher or lower percentages or rates than in the general population.

The disproportionately index (DI) is calculated by taking the proportion of children in foster care for a given race/ethnicity and dividing it by the proportion of the same race/ethnicity group in the child population.
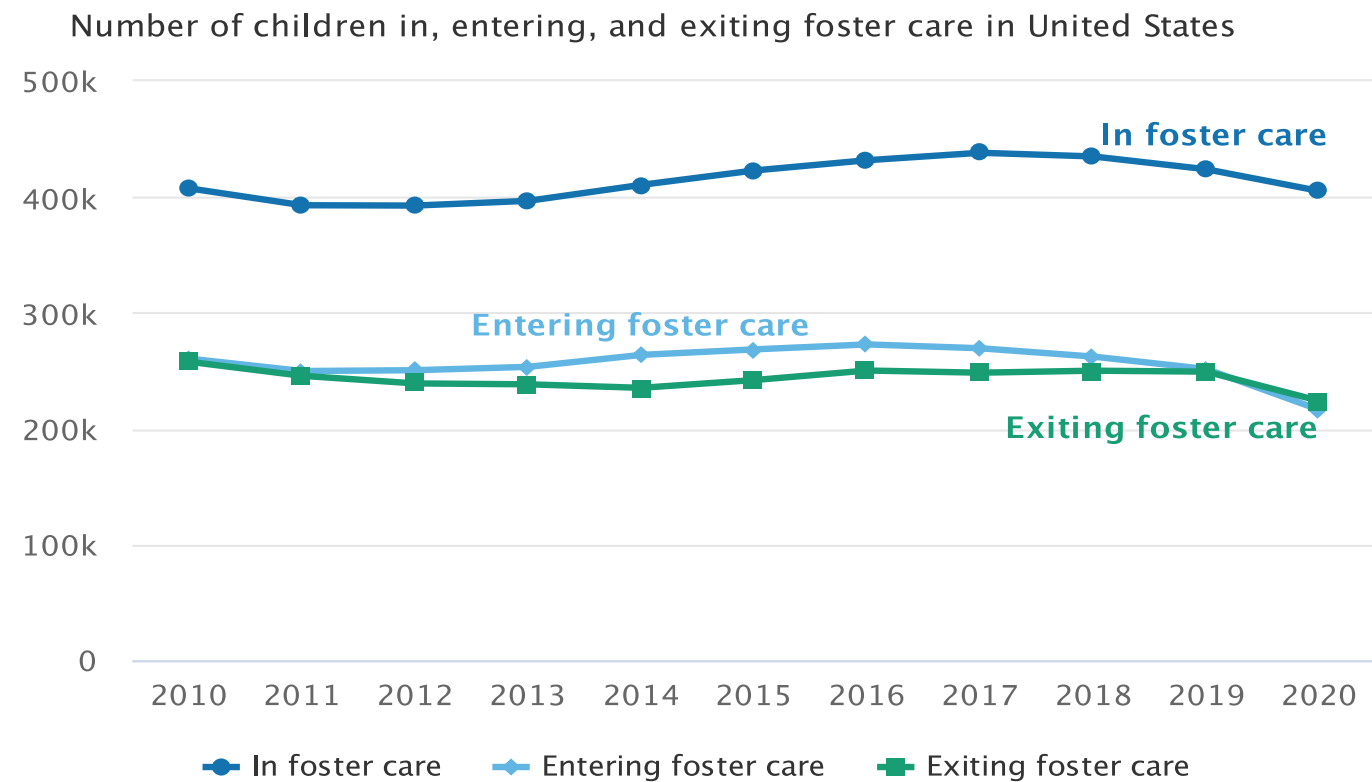
Prepared by Alice Kennedy, MSW July 2022

# Number of Children in, entering, and exiting Foster Care in the U.S. Dashboard (2010-2020)



Number of children in, entering, and exiting foster care in United States
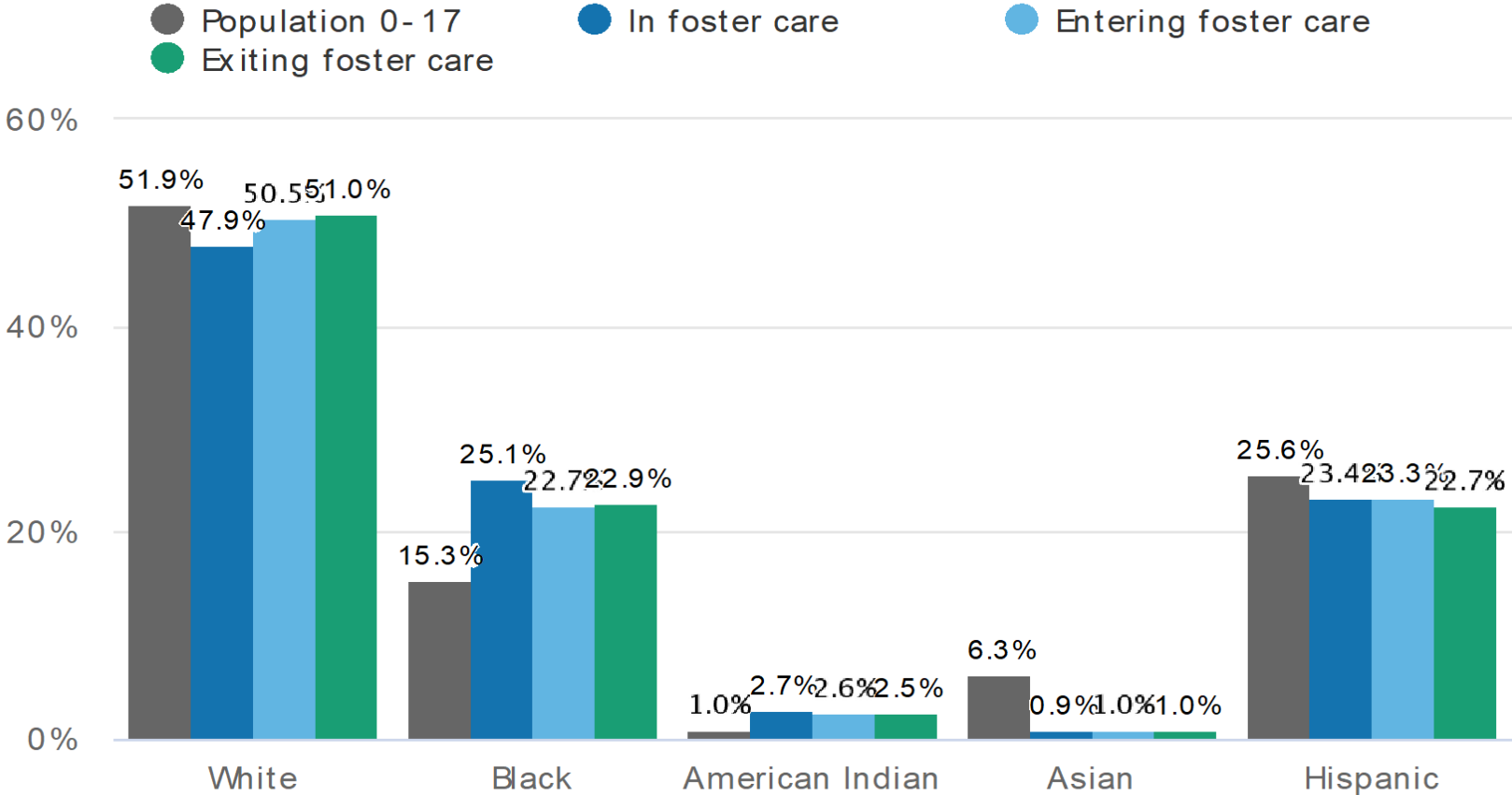
- **Nationally, the number of children in foster care at the end of the fiscal year declined in the last 5 years, from 433,201 to 405,234, as did the number entering foster care (from 273,177 to 216,148), and the number exiting foster care (from 249,995 to 223,894)**

*This dashboard is a product of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Juvenile Law Program (2022).*

# The race profile for the child population (ages 0-17) and children in, entering, and exiting foster care in the U.S.

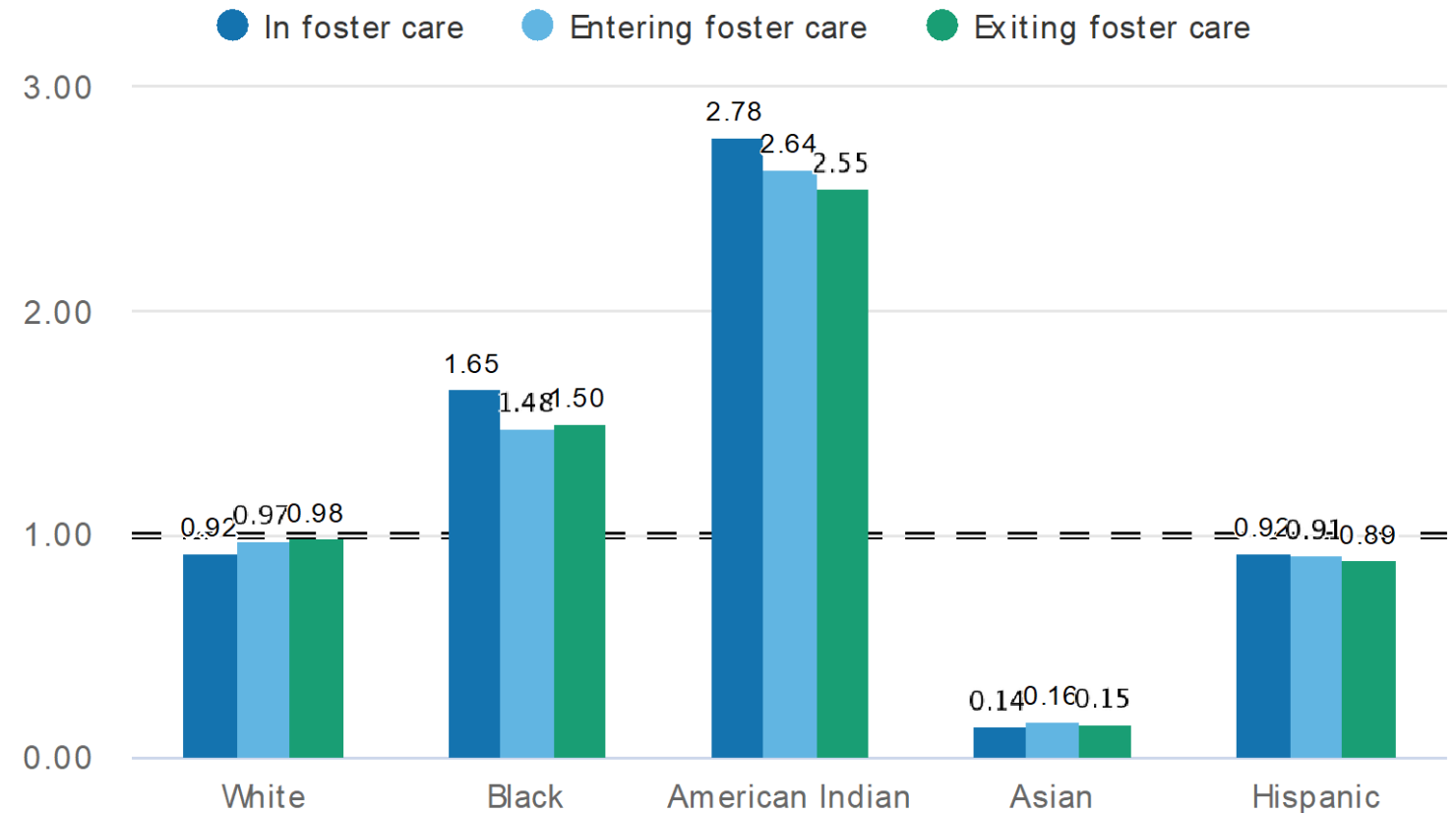Race/ethnicity profile of the child population, children in, entering, and exiting foster care: United States, 2020

● Population 0-17    ● In foster care    ● Entering foster care
● Exiting foster care

# DISPROPORTIONALITY:

## RATE OF OCCURRENCE

**Disproportionality is the level at which groups of children are present in the child welfare system relative to their proportion in the general population.**
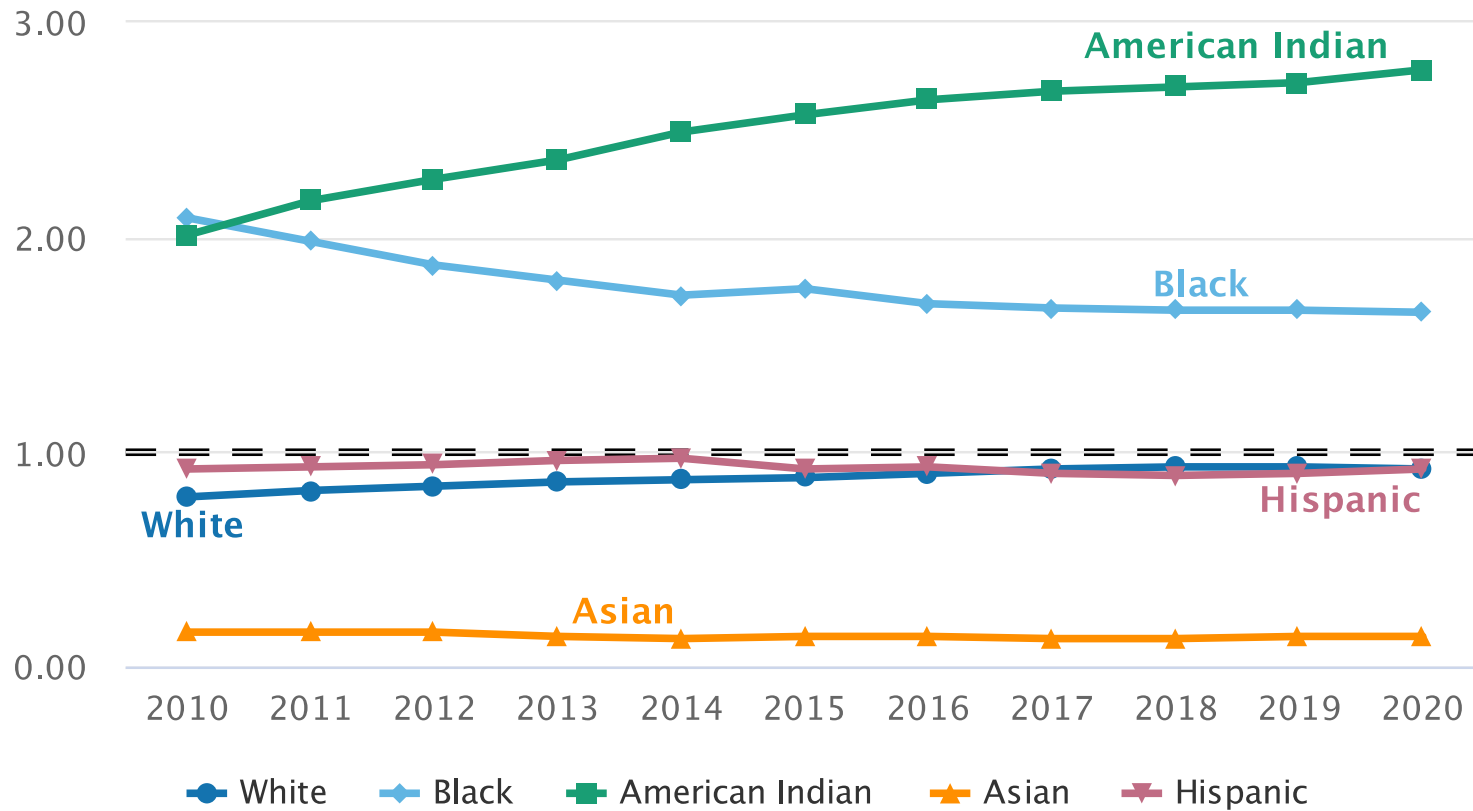
**A Disproportionality Index (DI) value of 1.0 reflects no disproportionality. A value greater than 1.0 reflects overrepresentation, while a value less than 1.0 reflects underrepresentation.**



Disproportionality index: children in, entering, and exiting foster care: United States, 2020
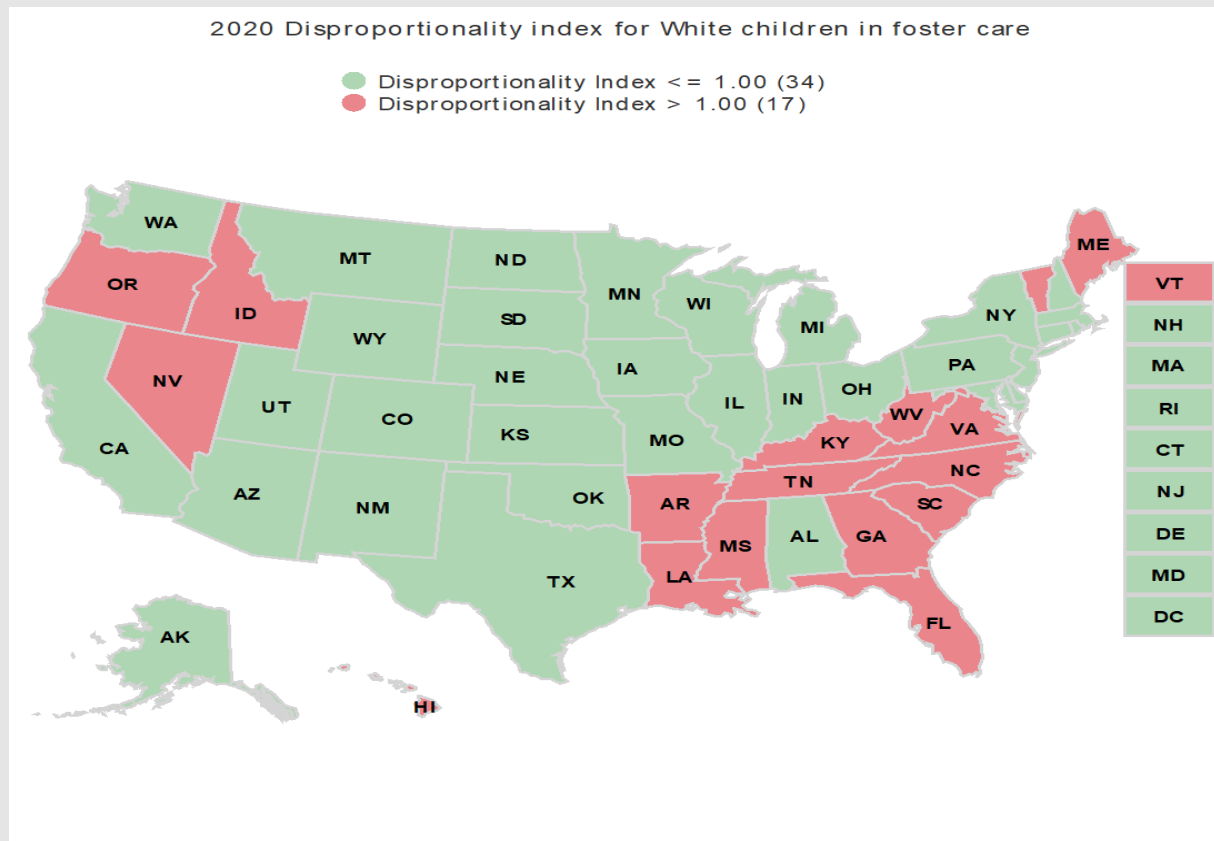
# DISPROPORTIONALITY NATIONAL TRENDS

Disproportionality index for children in foster care by race/ethnicity: United States



• **Nationally, trends in disproportionality have improved for black children but increased for American Indian children. For white, Hispanic, and Asian youth, the Disproportionality Index was below 1.0 each year since 2010.**

# Disproportionality Rates for White children in Foster Care Dashboard (2010-2020)



2020 Disproportionality index for White children in foster care

- Disproportionality Index <= 1.00 (34)
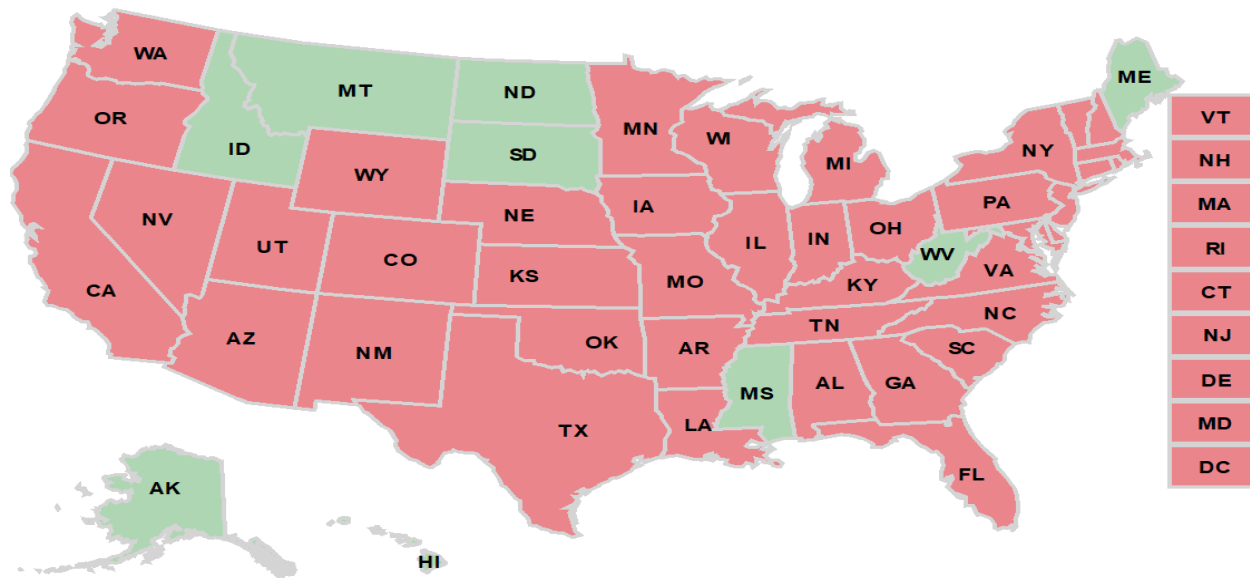- Disproportionality Index > 1.00 (17)

- Disproportionality varies by state. The map shows the disproportionality index (DI) for white youth in 2020; states shaded in green indicate that the DI for a particular race/ethnicity group in a state is at or below 1.0 (no disproportionality) while states shaded in red indicate the DI is greater than 1.0, that is, there is evidence of overrepresentation.

# Disproportionality Rates for Black children in Foster Care Dashboard (2010-2020)



2020 Disproportionality index for Black children in foster care

- Disproportionality Index <= 1.00 (9)
- Disproportionality Index > 1.00 (42)

• **Disproportionality varies by state. The map shows the disproportionality index (DI) for black youth in 2020; states shaded in green indicate that the DI for a particular race/ethnicity group in a state is at or below 1.0 (no disproportionality) while states shaded in red indicate the DI is greater than 1.0, that is, there is evidence of overrepresentation.**