

10-2022

Foster Youth in the Mountain West

Zachary Billot

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, zachary.billot@unlv.edu

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, eliadeltcarmen.solano-patricio@unlv.edu

Sofia Takhtadjian

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, sofia.takhtadjian@unlv.edu

Joshua Padilla

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, joshua.padilla@unlv.edu

Caitlin J. Saladino

Brookings Mountain West & The Lincy Institute, caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Repository Citation

Billot, Z., Solano-Patricio, E. D., Takhtadjian, S., Padilla, J., Saladino, C. J., Brown, W. E. (2022). Foster Youth in the Mountain West. *Demography Fact Sheet No. 23* 1-5.

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Authors

Zachary Billot, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Sofia Takhtadjian, Joshua Padilla, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown Jr.

FOSTER YOUTH IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Demography Fact Sheet No. 23 | October 2022

Prepared by: Zachary Billot, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Sofia Takhtadjian, Joshua Padilla, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines population trends for foster youth and their experiences with foster care in the Mountain West region. The data are sourced from the report “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States” which cites the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) for fiscal year (FY) 2020¹ and the “State-by State Data” report by the Casey Family Programs from FY 2020.² This fact sheet highlights the number of foster youth in the Mountain West (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) and their demographic composition.

ABOUT THE DATA:

The original report, “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States,” presents data examining the change in the population of foster youth, rates of maltreatment, and adoption of youth in foster care. The report from the Casey Family Programs, “State-by State Data,” shows the expenditures of states on foster care and related programming that NDACAN does not report.

The data reveal how much states spend on foster care services and prevention mechanisms, how effective those funded systems are at removing children from foster care into permanency or finding a permanent home, the efficacy of intervention by the state in matters of maltreatment and neglect, as well as racial and age disparities compared to national averages and trends.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Latino and African American children are disproportionately represented in foster care systems in every Mountain West state.
2. Every Mountain West state spends more on foster care than prevention and permanency services for foster youth and potential at-risk youth.
3. Colorado has the highest number of referrals for child abuse and neglect, 98,073, and number of children found to be victims of maltreatment, 11,615, in the Mountain West.
4. In FY2020, all Mountain West states had more children awaiting adoption from foster care than adopted children; New Mexico had the lowest rate of adoption (21%), and Colorado had the highest rate (47%).
5. In the Mountain West, Arizona has the highest number of children in foster care (3,643 children), and Utah has the lowest number, with 686 children waiting to be adopted.

¹ Williams Catherine, Sarah. “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

² “State-by State Data.” *Casey Family Programs*. www.casey.org/state-data/

Table 1 presents the difference between the number of children adopted from the foster care system and the number of children waiting to be adopted from the foster care system in the Mountain West states during FY 2020. Colorado had the smallest difference (89), and Nevada had the largest difference (906). Every Mountain West state has more children waiting to be adopted than are adopted from foster care.

Table 1: Number of Children Adopted from Foster Care vs. Waiting to be Adopted from Foster Care in the Mountain West, FY 2020

Mountain West State	Children Adopted from Foster Care	Children Waiting to Be Adopted from Foster Care
Colorado	832	921
Utah	518	686
Arizona	2,905	3,643
New Mexico	281	1,040
Nevada	796	1,702

*Adapted from “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *Child Trends*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

Table 2 shows the age distribution of children in foster care in the United States and in each Mountain West state. Colorado (23%) is nine percent above the national average (14%) for foster youth 16 to 20 years old. Foster youth aged 1 to 5 years old in the Mountain West are most represented in Nevada at 6% above the national average and those less than one year old are the least represented in New Mexico at 1 percent below the national average.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Children in Foster Care, FY 2020

	< 1 year	1 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 to 20 years
United States	7%	34%	22%	22%	14%
Arizona	10%	35%	21%	22%	12%
Colorado	9%	29%	18%	21%	23%
Nevada	9%	40%	23%	18%	10%
New Mexico	6%	34%	27%	25%	8%
Utah	8%	30%	22%	22%	18%

*Adapted from “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *Child Trends*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

Table 3 shows the foster care caseload in each Mountain West state, by race and ethnicity. In every Mountain West state, African American children are overrepresented in the foster care caseload compared to the general child population. Asian children, on the other hand, are underrepresented in each state’s foster care system compared to the general child population. In New Mexico, American Indian/Alaska Native children comprise 10% of the general child population, and their foster care caseload is underrepresented by 2%. In Utah, American Indian/Alaska Native children represent 1% of the general child population and their foster care caseload is overrepresented by 2%.

Table 3: Youth Foster Care Caseload in the Mountain West, by Race and Ethnicity FY 2020

		White	Hispanic or Latino	African American	Multiple Races	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native
Arizona	Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity	36%	41%	12%	5%	<1%	<1%	5%
	General Child Population	38%	45%	5%	4%	3%	<1%	5%
Colorado	Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity	44%	38%	11%	6%	1%	<1%	1%
	General Child Population	55%	32%	4%	5%	3%	<1%	1%
Nevada	Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity	39%	26%	26%	7%	1%	1%	1%
	General Child Population	34%	41%	11%	7%	6%	1%	1%
New Mexico	Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity	20%	65%	5%	3%	0%	<1%	8%
	General Child Population	23%	62%	2%	3%	1%	<1%	10%
Utah	Foster Care Caseload by Race/Ethnicity	61%	25%	4%	6%	1%	1%	3%
	General Child Population	73%	18%	1%	4%	2%	1%	1%

*Adapted from “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *Child Trends*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

Table 4 lists the number of child abuse and neglect referrals, the number of children who received an investigation or assessment, and the number of children that were found to be victims of maltreatment for Mountain West states and the United States in FY 2020. Colorado has the highest number of referrals for child abuse and neglect (98,073) and number of children found to be victims of maltreatment (11,615) in the Mountain West; Arizona conducted the highest number of investigations and assessments (77,146). Nevada (5,016) has the fewest number of children found to be victims of maltreatment in the Mountain West.

Table 4: Number of Referrals, Investigations, and Number of Victims by State, FY 2020

States	Number of Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals	Number of Children who Received an Investigation or Assessment	Number of Children Found to be Victims of Maltreatment
Nevada	37,973	27,980	5,016
Utah	39,498	25,860	9,694
Arizona	76,334	77,146	9,954
Colorado	98,073	43,483	11,615
New Mexico	40,381	25,980	7,050
United States	3,643,232	3,144,644	618,399

*Adapted from “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *Child Trends*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

Figures 1 through 5 display the race and ethnicity of maltreatment victims in the foster care systems in Mountain West states.

Figures 1-5: Race and Ethnicity of Maltreatment Victims in the Foster Care System in Mountain West States, FY 2020

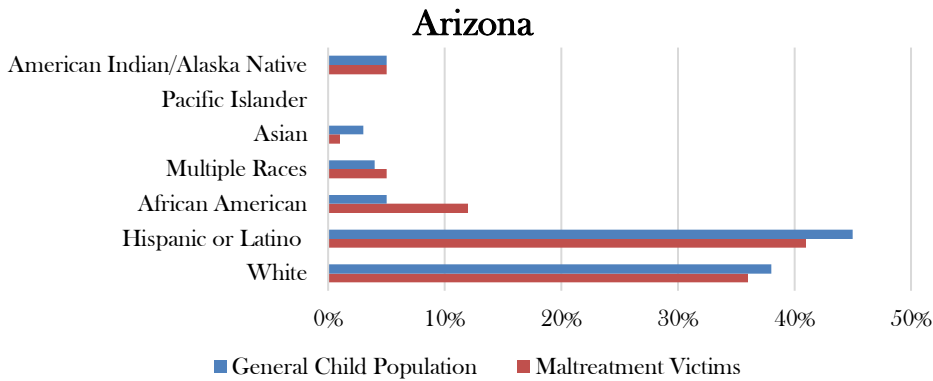


Figure 1:

In Arizona, African American and multiracial foster youth are overrepresented as victims of maltreatment, while white, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian youth are underrepresented. Pacific Islander youth made up <1% of victims as well as the general child population.

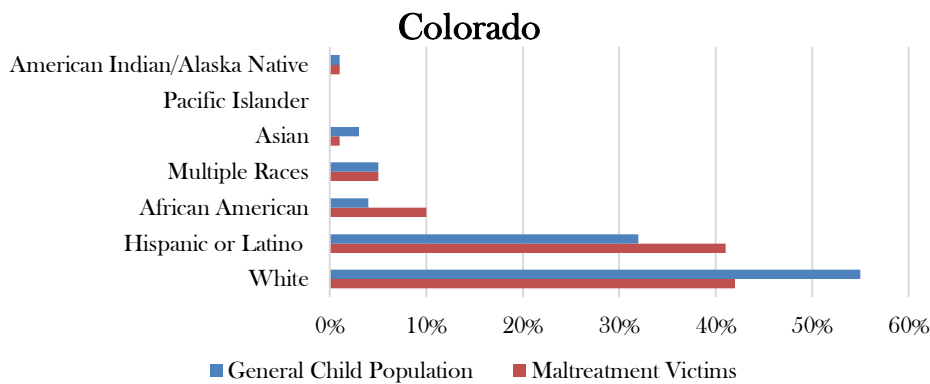


Figure 2:

In Colorado, Hispanic/Latino children and African American children are overrepresented as victims of maltreatment, while white and Pacific Islander youth are underrepresented.

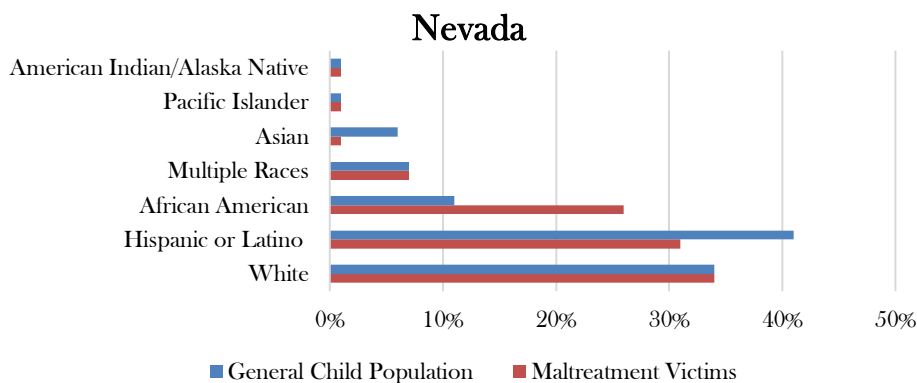


Figure 3:

In Nevada, African American children are the only racial/ethnic group that is overrepresented as victims of maltreatment in the foster care caseload.

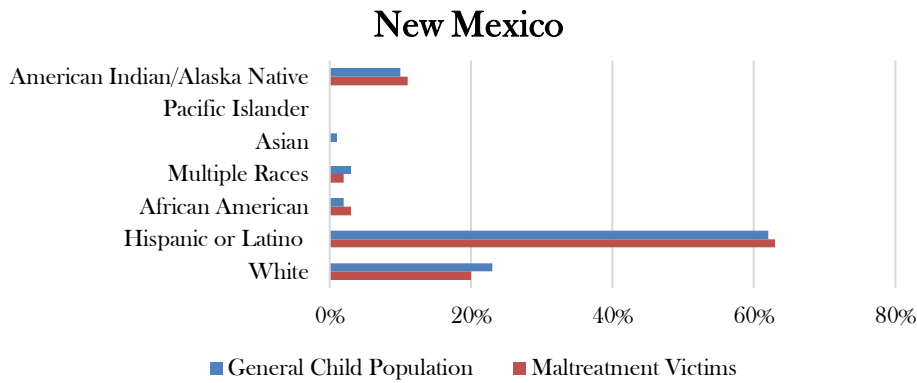


Figure 4: In New Mexico, white children were underrepresented as victims of maltreatment, while American/Indian/Alaska Native children, African American children, and Hispanic/Latino were overrepresented. Asian children were not represented at all as victims of maltreatment, and Pacific Islander youth made up <1% of victims as well as the general child population.

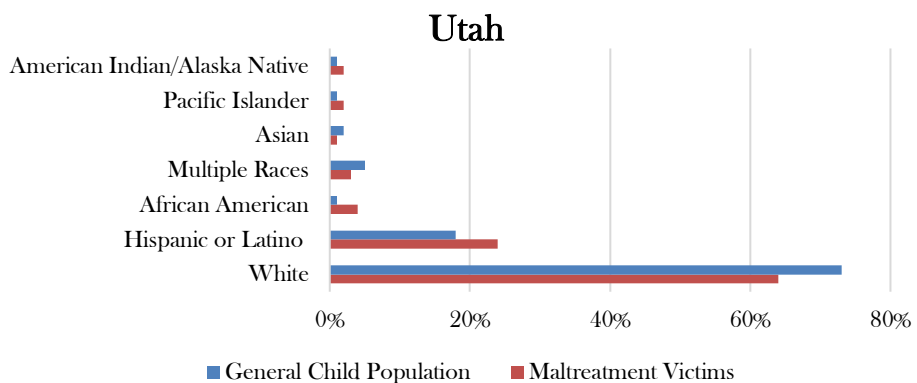
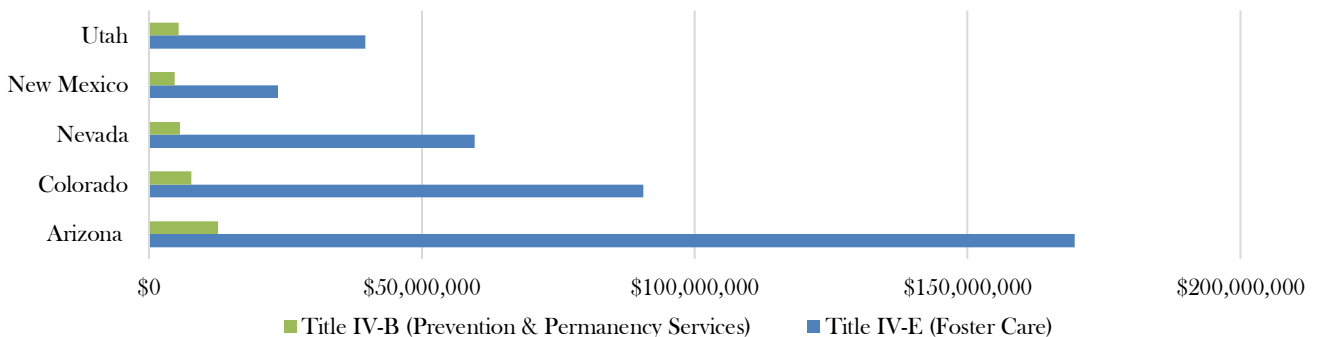


Figure 5: In Utah, Hispanic/Latino youth, as well as African American and Pacific Islander youth were overrepresented as victims of maltreatment.

*Adapted from “State-level Data for Understanding Child Welfare in the United States.” *Child Trends*. www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states

Figure 6 shows the dollar amount spent on foster care youth in the Mountain West region. The expenditures are split between Title IV-E, the foster care programs, and Title IV-B, prevention and permanency services. Every state in the Mountain West funds foster care at a higher rate than prevention and permanency services. New Mexico spends the most on Title IV-B compared to the total funding. Arizona spends the most on foster youth expenses in general, both foster care and prevention and permanency services in the Mountain West. New Mexico spends the least on these services in the Mountain West region.

Figure 6: Funding used for Title IV-E Foster Care vs. Title IV-B Prevention & Permanency Services by Mountain West State, FY 2020



*Adapted from “State by State Data”. *Casey Family Programs*. www.casey.org/state-data/