



Understanding the Landscape of Foster Care and Adoption in the United States

01. Essential Facts



- **Children in Foster Care:** Over 437,000 children are navigating the foster care system.
- **Awaiting Adoption:** There are 118,000 children and youth in America waiting for their forever homes.

02. Journey Through Foster Care

- **Adoption Wait Time:** Children typically wait 3-4 years or more.
- **Foster Care Duration:** On average, children spend 12 to 20 months in foster care; 10% experience more than 5 years.
- **Entry and Exit Ages:** Average age for entering foster care is 7 to 8, with the exit age close to 7 to 9.



03. Outcomes and Demographics



- **Reunification and Adoption:** 51% of children reunify with parents or primary caregivers, while 52% are adopted, often by foster parents.
- **Gender Distribution:** The foster system consists of more boys (52%) than girls (48%).
- **Racial Demographics:** Foster children are 44% White, 23% African American, and 21% Hispanic.

04. Age Specific Insights

- **Early Childhood Entry:** 26% of children entering foster care are under the age of one.
- **Older Youth in Care:** About 22% of youth in foster care are age 13 or older.



05. Reasons for Foster Care Placement



- **Neglect:** 61% of children are removed from their homes due to neglect.
- **Parental Drug Abuse:** 34% of removals are due to parental drug abuse, a significant issue within families.
- **Caregiver's Inability to Cope:** 14% of children are removed because their caregivers cannot cope with their needs.
- **Physical Abuse:** 12% of removals are due to physical abuse, a stark reality for some children in the system.

06. Challenges and Mental Health

- **Mental Health and Stability:** Foster children face emotional, social, and academic challenges, including higher rates of PTSD compared to U.S. war veterans.
- **Youth Aging Out:** 20,500 youth age out of foster care annually without permanent families, facing higher risks of incarceration and lower graduation rates.

