

2.7 Million Children in the United States Live in Kinship Care

What is kinship care?

Children who do not live with their parents but whose grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends provide them with a home are said to be in "kinship care."

Why are children in kinship care?

There are multiple reasons that children's parents may be unwilling or unable to offer care or support, including military service, mental health issues, substance use disorder, or incarceration.

How do children enter kinship care?

Most children enter kinship care informally. Informal arrangements may be reached independently by a family or may be facilitated by a child welfare agency or court.

In a smaller number of instances, children are formally placed with kin by the child welfare agency or a court (these children are counted as in **both foster care and kinship care**).

In addition, some children leave foster care to live with kin, informally or formally via legal guardianship (including **Title IV-E guardianship**) or adoption.*

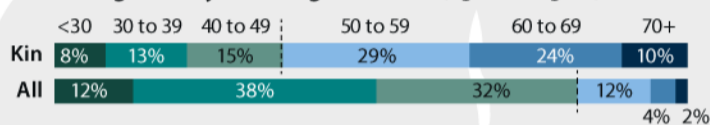
Most children in kinship care live with a grandparent.

(Relationship of caregiver)

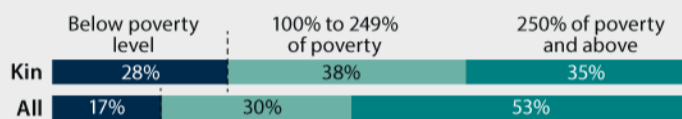


Compared to all children in the United States, children in kinship care are more likely to . . .

▶ have a caregiver 50 years of age or older. (Age of caregiver)

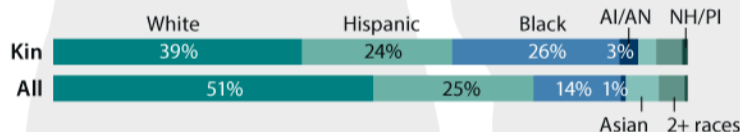


▶ live in a family with income below the poverty level. (Family income)

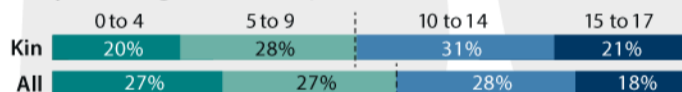


▶ be black or American Indian/Alaska Native. (Race/ethnicity of child)

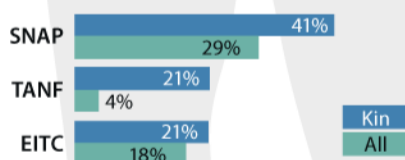
AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native; NH/PI = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander



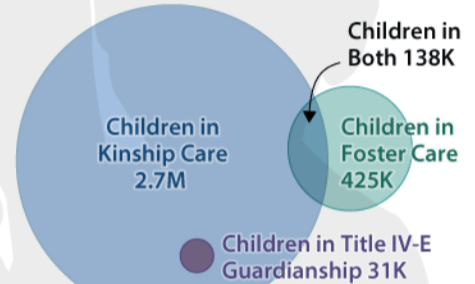
▶ be 10 years of age or older. (Age of child)



▶ live in a household that receives assistance from one or more of the following programs.

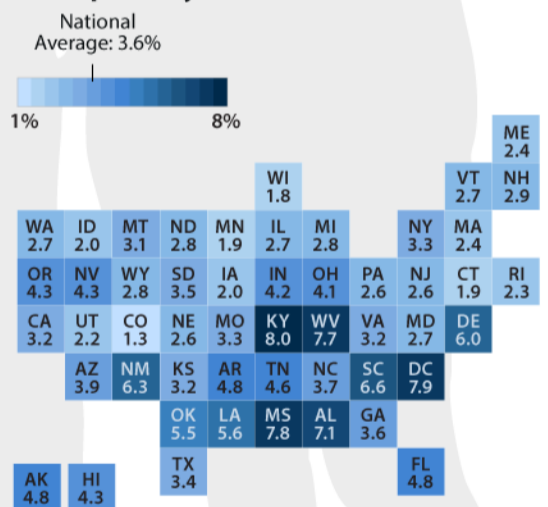


Kin = U.S. children in kinship care; All = all U.S. children



*Children formally adopted by kin may not be counted in these data because the relationship of the kin caregiver has legally changed to "parent."

Percent of children living in kinship care by state



Income support and accessing other services

Children in kinship care are generally eligible for a **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child-only benefit**, provided they are living with a grandparent or other relative.

Children in both foster care and kinship care may be eligible for **foster care support under Title IV-E** of the Social Security Act if their caregiver is also a licensed foster parent. Those same children may also be eligible for **Title IV-E guardianship assistance** when they leave care if their kin caregiver becomes their legal guardian. Most children who leave foster care for formal adoption by kin are expected to be eligible for **Title IV-E adoption assistance**.

Federal support for evidence-based **kinship navigator programs** is also authorized under the Title IV-E program.

Information prepared by Emilie Stoltzfus, Specialist in Social Policy; Conor F. Boyle, Analyst in Social Policy; and Amber Wilhelm, Visual Information Specialist. For more information, see CRS Congressional Distribution Memorandum, "Characteristics of Children Living in Kinship Care," by Conor F. Boyle.

Sources: Unless otherwise noted, figures represent CRS analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) data and estimate a three-year average of the years 2017-2019. Data for public assistance receipt were estimated using the TRIM3 microsimulation model. Data on children in foster care were drawn from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), as of the last day of FY2018. Data on children receiving Title IV-E guardianship assistance are as estimated for FY2018 in the President's FY2020 budget. "Children" includes individuals under age 18, or for guardianship assistance under age 21. The "United States" includes the 50 states and DC (CPS ASEC and TRIM3 analyses) or those jurisdictions and Puerto Rico (AFCARS data).

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