



Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care in the U.S.

Who are the transition-age youth in foster care in US?

	US
Number of transition-age youth (16 to 21 year olds) in foster care in 2015 ¹	113,829
Number of transition-age youth who emancipated or aged out of foster care in 2015	20,698
Share of total child welfare agency expenditures in SFY 2014 that were spent on services and assistance for older youth in, or previously in, foster care ²	2%

Age distribution of transition-age youth in foster care between 2011 and 2015

	Total # of youth	16 yr olds	17 yr olds	18 yr olds	19 yr olds	20-21 yr olds
2011	133,179	32%	34%	26%	5%	3%
2012	125,211	32%	34%	25%	6%	4%
2013	121,681	31%	33%	24%	7%	4%
2014	116,867	32%	33%	24%	7%	4%
2015	113,829	34%	33%	26%	5%	2%

Foster care entry reasons for transition-age youth in foster care³

Neglect	43%	Caretaker inability to cope	19%
Physical abuse	11%	Parental substance abuse	15%
Sexual abuse	7%	Child substance abuse	5%
Child behavior problem	38%	Inadequate housing	6%

Length of time in foster care for transition-age youth

	US
Median age when entered foster care	15 years
Percent of transition-age youth in foster care 3 or more years ⁴	30%
Percent of transition-age youth who exited and re-entered foster care	34%

Number of foster care placements for transition-age youth in foster care⁵

	1 or 2 placements	3 or 4 placements	5 or more placements
US	45%	21%	33%

Case plan goal for transition-age youth in foster care⁶

	US	
	16-17 yr olds	18-21 yr olds
Adoption	10%	4%
Emancipation (often referred to as "aging out") ⁷	12%	50%
Guardianship or live with other relative(s)	11%	7%
Long-term foster care	10%	14%
Reunification	50%	23%

Most recent placement setting for transition-age youth in foster care⁸

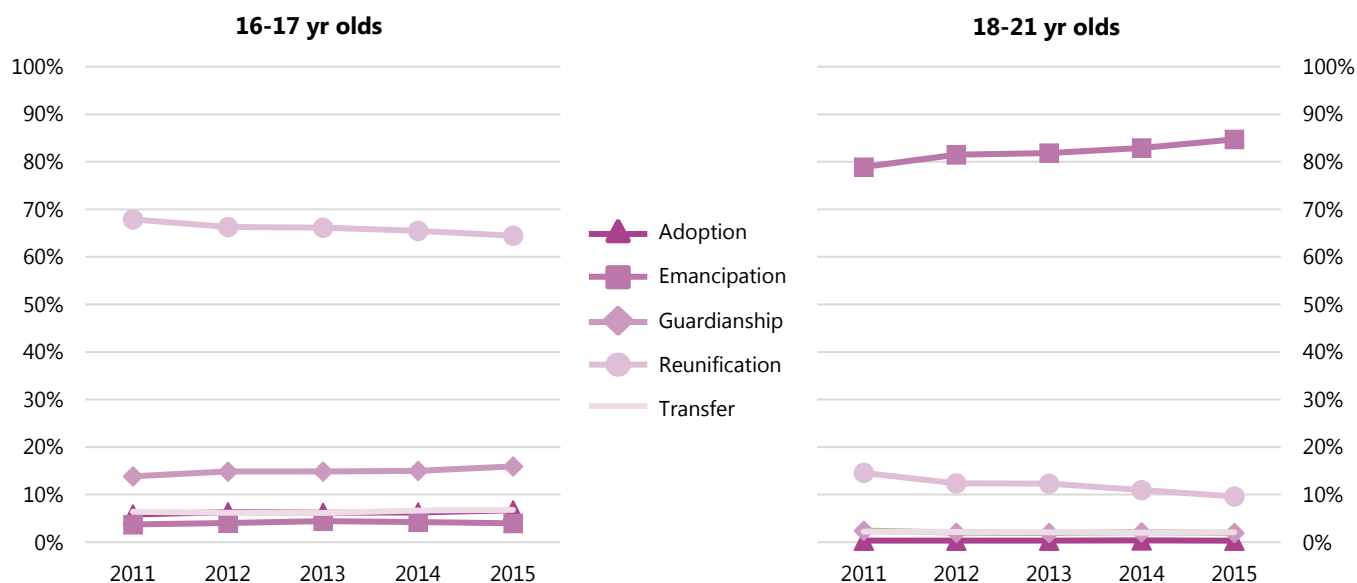
	US	
	16-17 yr olds	18-21 yr olds
Group home or institution	40%	29%
Non-relative foster family	29%	29%
Relative foster family	13%	8%
Supervised independent living ⁹	1%	22%
Trial home visit	10%	5%

Why did 47,298 transition-age youth in the US leave care in 2015?

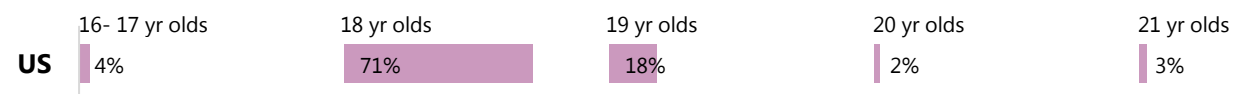
Exit reasons of youth who left foster care¹⁰

	US	
	16-17 yr olds	18-21 yr olds
Adoption	7%	<1%
Emancipation (often referred to as "aging out")	4%	85%
Guardianship or living with other relative(s)	16%	2%
Reunified with parent/primary caretaker	64%	10%
Transfer to another agency	7%	2%

Exit reasons in US since 2011¹¹



Age distribution of transition-age youth who emancipated (often referred to as "aging out")



Of the 12,887 youth who were in care on their 18th birthday in FY 2014...¹²

	US	
	Number	Percent
Number and percent that were still in care on their 19 th birthday ¹³	3,189	25%
Exit reasons for those that exited care before their 19 th birthday		
Emancipation (often referred to as "aging out")	6,154	77%
Permanency ¹⁴	1,416	18%
Other non-permanency situation ¹⁵	422	5%
No information available on status as of 19 th birthday	1,508	12%

How are transition-age youth in the US faring at age 19 and 21?

Of youth who spent time in foster care...¹⁶

	US	
	at age 19	at age 21
Total number of youth who were eligible to complete the NYTD survey	11,350	11,471
Total number of youth who responded to the NYTD survey	7,584	7,083
Finished high school/GED	56%	76%
Employed full- or part-time	34%	49%
Medicaid or other health insurance coverage	79%	75%
Experienced homelessness in past two years	20%	27%
Attending school	55%	32%
Connected to an adult	90%	87%
Had children in the past two years	12%	27%
Was incarcerated in the past two years	22%	22%
Referred for substance abuse treatment in the past two years	15%	11%
Receiving public assistance	25%	32%

Of youth in the general population...¹⁷

	US	
	at age 19	at age 21
Total number of youth	4,246,635	4,670,085
Finished high school/GED	87%	90%
Employed full- or part-time	45%	60%
Attending school	68%	52%
Medicaid or other health insurance coverage	86%	84%

How does the US support transition-age youth?

Extended foster care

Number of states with extended foster care ¹⁸	45
Number of states that extend foster care through Title IV-E ¹⁹	24

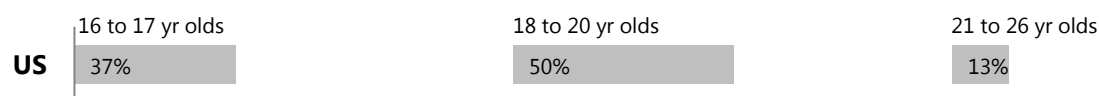
Funding for services and supports for transition-age youth²⁰

Dollars spent by child welfare agencies in the US in SFY 2014 on services and assistance for older youth in, or previously in, foster care ²¹	
Federal	\$260,195,882
State/Local	\$257,090,242
Federal Chafee dollars spent by child welfare agencies in the US in SFY 2014 ²²	\$171,063,406

Independent living services provided to transition-age youth in the US²³

	US
Number of youth (aged 16-26) receiving independent living services in FFY 2015	95,810

Age distribution of youth receiving independent living services



¹ Unless specified otherwise, data on foster care is from the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), and represents federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015). Unless otherwise noted, for each calculation, children who were missing data on the relevant indicator were excluded from analyses. Number of youth age 16 to 21 served in foster care during FFY 2015. Age is calculated on the last day of the fiscal year or the day they exited care.

² Data are from Child Trends' state fiscal year (SFY) 2014 Child Welfare Financing Survey. For more information on the survey, see *Child Welfare Financing SFY2014: A survey of federal, state, and local expenditures*. Services and assistance for older youth excludes foster care maintenance payments for youth 18 and older. For most states, figures are based on approximations.

³ Totals add up to more than 100% because youth can have more than one entry reason. The following entry reasons are not presented: abandonment, parental incarceration, child disability, parental death, and relinquishment of parental rights.

⁴ Length of stay in care is calculated based on the current removal episode.

⁵ The number of places the youth has lived, including the current setting, during the current removal episode. Does not include trial home visits.

⁶ These figures may not add up to 100%, as youth who did not yet have a goal established are not presented.

⁷ The goal of emancipation is defined as maintaining the youth in a foster care setting until the youth reaches majority (i.e., is considered an adult) due to age, marriage, etc., as defined by the state.

⁸ Placement as of the last day of FFY 2015 (September 30, 2015) or immediately preceding exit from care. These figures may not add up to 100%, as youth who were runaways are not presented.

⁹ An alternative traditional living arrangement where the youth is under the supervision of the agency but without 24-hour adult supervision, is receiving financial support from the child welfare agency, and is in a setting which provides the opportunity for increased responsibility for self-care.

¹⁰ Of youth who exited care in FFY 2015. Information on exit reasons does not include youth who died. Emancipation means the youth left foster care at the age of majority, as defined by the state. Percentages on exit from care may not add up to 100%, as youth who ran away are not presented.

¹¹ Of youth who exited care in each FFY since 2011.

¹² Includes youth who turned 18 in FFY 2014, and did not exit care within the 30 days before or after their 18th birthday.

¹³ Includes youth who turned 19 in FFY 2015, and did not exit care within the 30 days before or after their 19th birthday.

¹⁴ Permanency includes: reunification, adoption, guardianship, or living with other relative(s).

¹⁵ Other non-permanency situations include: runaway, transfer to another agency.

¹⁶ Data on outcomes of youth who spent time in foster care comes from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Data for 19-year-olds is from FFY 2013 and for 21-year-olds is from FFY 2015.

¹⁷ Data on youth in the general population comes from the American Community Survey 2011-2015 estimates.

¹⁸ Data are from a survey of child welfare agencies on services and supports for youth transitioning from foster care, conducted by Child Trends in 2015-2016. Extended care refers to a state's child welfare agency maintaining placement and care responsibility of a young person past their 18th birthday (the age of legal majority in most states), through the federally matched Title IV-E foster care program, state and/or local dollars, or other federal sources.

¹⁹ Data as of 4/3/2017 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Extension of foster care through Title IV-E allows states to receive federal Title IV-E reimbursement for certain costs associated with supports to eligible young people to remain in foster care up to age 21.

²⁰ Data in this table are from Child Trends' SFY 2014 Child Welfare Financing Survey. Most states were only able to provide approximate percentages for how their dollars are spent; we applied those approximate percentages to their total reported spending levels to get estimates of how much they spent on older youth.

²¹ Services and assistance for older youth excludes foster care maintenance payments for youth 18 and older.

²² The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program allocates funding to states for expenses related to independent living activities that prepare youth to successfully transition out of foster care. Funding can also be used for services for some young people who have already left foster care. Chafee dollars reported here includes education and training vouchers.

²³ Data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Young people, age 16 through 26, who received independent living services in FFY 2015 paid for or provided by the state agency that administers the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.