



# CHILDREN'S ACTION ALLIANCE

*A Voice for Arizona's Children since 1988*

## **The Color of Foster Care: Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System in Maricopa County<sup>1</sup>**

May 2008

Three national incidence studies have shown there are no statistically significant differences in overall maltreatment rates between families of different races and ethnicities.<sup>2</sup> Yet numerous research studies across the nation have established that there is differential treatment of children by race and ethnicity in child welfare systems.<sup>3</sup>

As Americans, we believe that all children and families should be treated equally. On June 30, 2007, approximately 62% of children living in out-of-home care (foster care) in Maricopa County were children of color, although children of color represented only 54% of the child population in Maricopa County (age 0-17). African-American and Native American children are more than three times as likely as Anglo or Latino children in Maricopa County to be in foster care.

The data raise important questions.

- Why are Native American and African-American youth overrepresented in each stage of the system?
- What characteristics of families or family circumstances, such as drug use or poverty, vary by race and ethnicity?
- What are the other factors decision-makers are considering? How are cultural factors such as demeanor and respect for public authority influencing decision-making?
- Are there differences in the availability of community supports in neighborhoods that influence assessments about the likelihood of child safety or the opportunity for treatment services?
- What are the systemic or institutional factors that are placing more Native American and African-American youth in foster care and keeping them in care longer?
- How are racial and ethnic stereotypes or assumptions influencing the outcomes of these cases?
- How can CPS, juvenile court judges and other decision makers confront these factors to give each family the best opportunity for keeping children safe, providing for their well-being in care and assuring timely family reunification or alternative permanent plans?

We hope this presentation of the data will help stimulate answers to these questions and help identify achievable action steps to address the disproportionality.

---

<sup>1</sup> Analysis by Children's Action Alliance for Casey Family Programs. All data regarding the child welfare system was provided by the Arizona Department of Economic Security, and does not include data from tribal governments in Arizona. Population data is from the 2006 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau. All statistics are for Maricopa County.

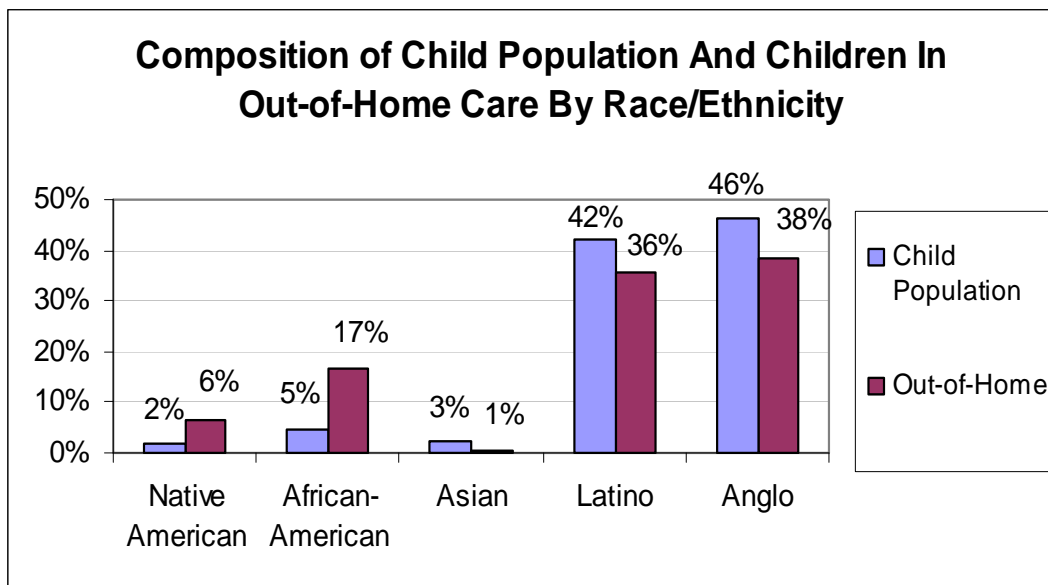
<sup>2</sup> Hill, R.B. (2006). *Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update*, Washington, DC: Casey/Center for the Study of Social Policy Alliance for Racial Equality.

<sup>3</sup> *Understanding Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice*, Chapin Hall, Center for Children at the University of Chicago and Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University, draft, March 2008.

On June 30, 2007:

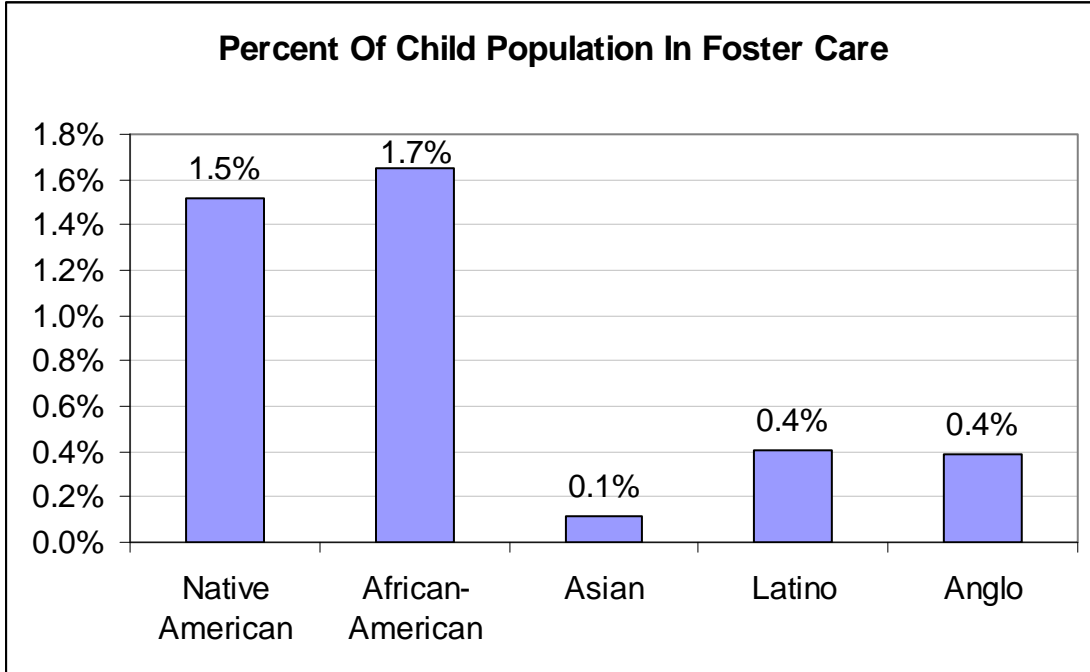
- Native American children were 6.4% of those in foster care, compared to only 2.0% of the County's child population (age 0-17). Native Americans were disproportionately represented in out-of-home care at a rate of 3.20:1 (6.4/2.0).
- African-American children were 16.8% of those in foster care, compared to only 4.8% of the County's child population (age 0-17). African-Americans were disproportionately represented in out-of-home care at a rate of 3.50:1 (16.8/4.8).
- Latino children were 35.7% of those in foster care, compared to 42.3% of the County's child population (age 0-17). Latinos were disproportionately underrepresented in out-of-home care at a rate of 0.84:1 (35.7/42.3).
- Anglo children were 38.3% of those in foster care, compared to 46.3% of the County's child population (age 0-17). Anglos were disproportionately underrepresented in out-of-home care at a rate of 0.83:1 (38.3/46.3).
- Children of Asian descent were 0.6% of those in foster care, compared to 2.5% of the County's child population (age 0-17). Children of Asian descent were disproportionately underrepresented in the out-of-home care at a rate of 0.24:1 (0.6/2.5).

Figure 1



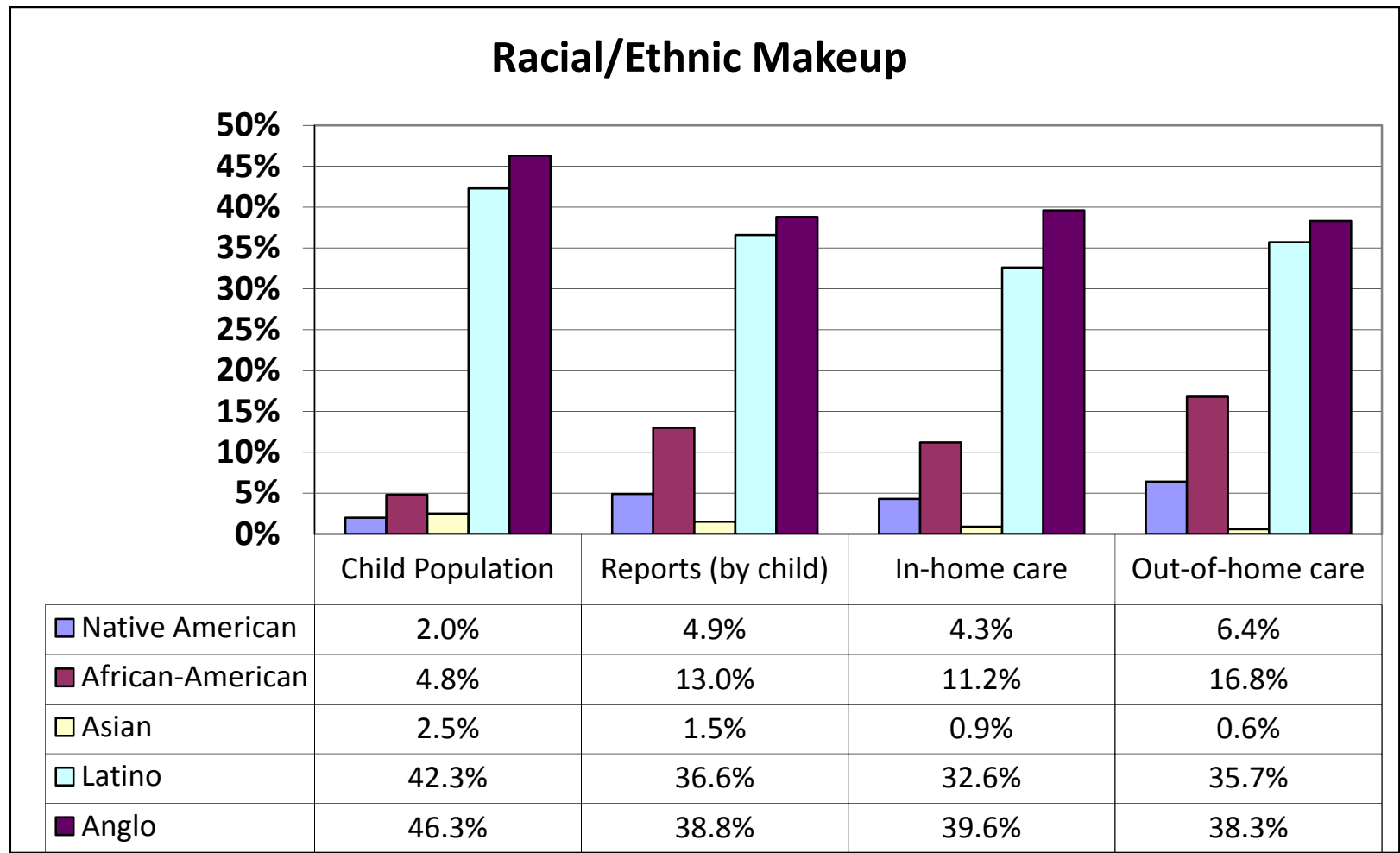
- Native American and African-American children were over-represented in out-of-home care compared to the general population, while Latino, Anglo, and Asian children were under-represented.

Figure 2



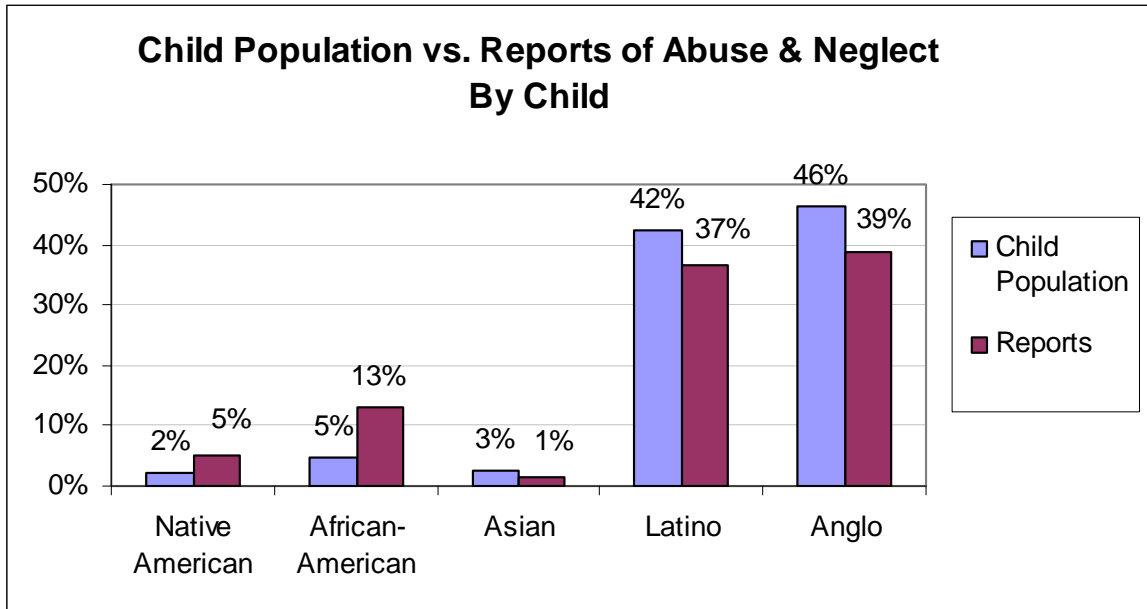
- Native American and African-American children in Maricopa County are each more than three times as likely to be in out-of-home care as Latino and Anglo children. Children of Asian descent are even less likely to be in out-of-home care.

Figure 3



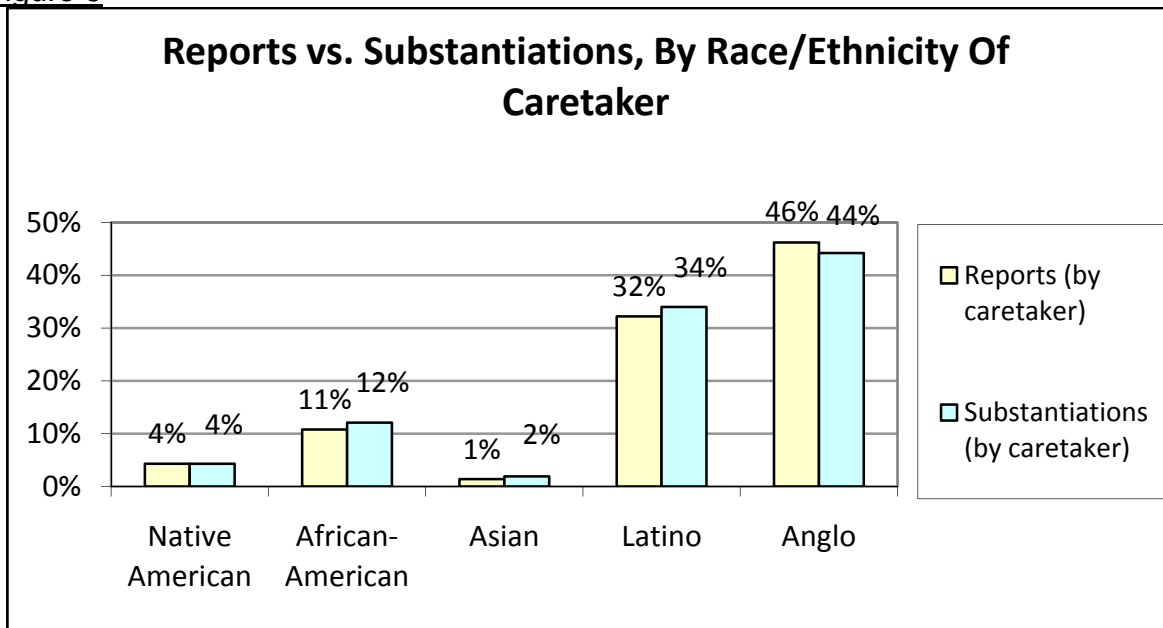
- Native American and African-American children are over-represented in every stage of the child welfare system in Maricopa County.
- Latino, Asian, and Anglo children are underrepresented in the child welfare system in Maricopa County.

Figure 4



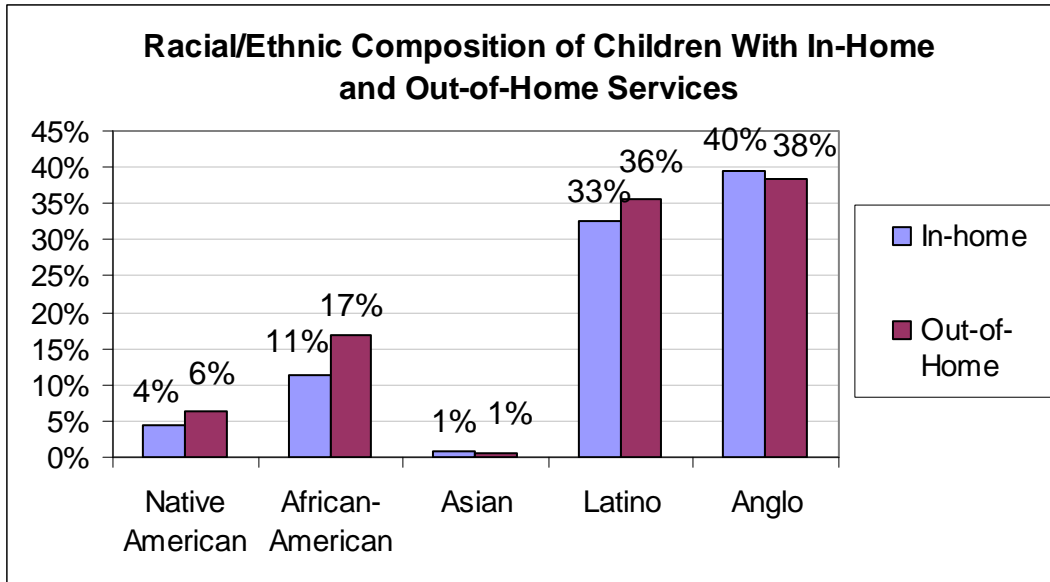
- Native American and African-American children make up a larger share of subjects of reports of abuse and neglect than they do the child population.
- Asian, Latino, and Anglo children make up a smaller share of subjects of reports of abuse and neglect than they do the child population.

Figure 5



- Based on the race/ethnicity of the caretaker, African-American, Asian, and Latino children are overrepresented among substantiated cases of abuse and neglect compared to reports of abuse and neglect.

Figure 6



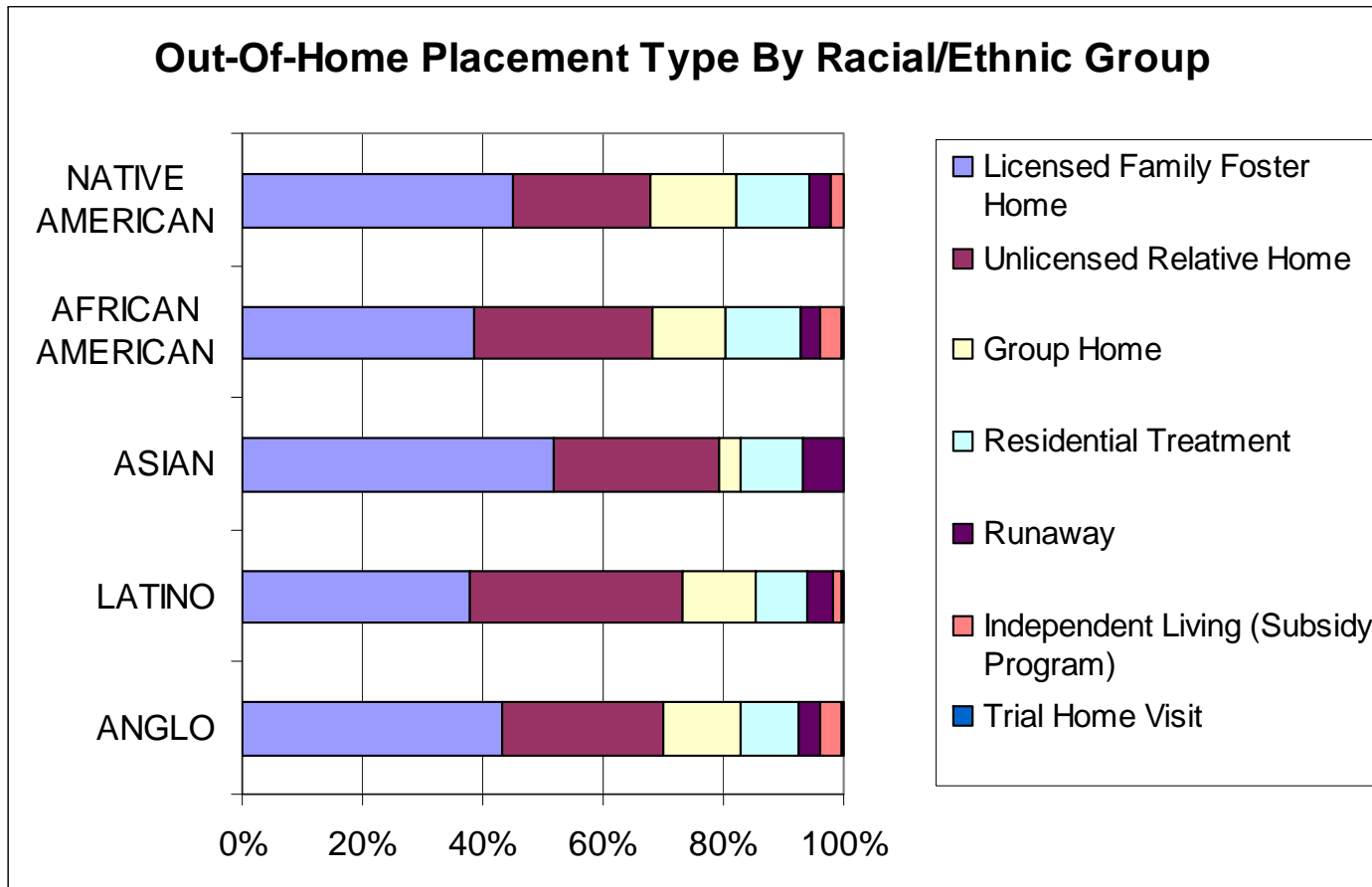
- Many families are offered services in their own home instead of children being taken into foster care.
- Children of color make up a greater proportion of children in out-of-home care than of children receiving in-home services.
- This data is also a part of the data in Figure 3.

Figure 7 – Children In Out-Of-Home Care By Placement Type

	Licensed Family Foster Home	Unlicensed Relative Home	Group Home	Residential Treatment	Runaway	Independent Living (Subsidy Program, Age 17+)	Trial Home Visit	All Placement Types	Total #
NATIVE AMERICAN	7.1%	4.8%	7.3%	8.2%	6.0%	5.0%	0.0%	6.4%	322
AFRICAN AMERICAN	15.8%	16.6%	16.3%	21.4%	14.7%	22.3%	20.0%	16.8%	843
ASIAN	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.6%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	29
LATINO	33.1%	42.0%	34.3%	31.0%	43.5%	18.0%	46.7%	35.7%	1,796
ANGLO	40.6%	33.8%	39.9%	38.4%	33.7%	54.0%	26.7%	38.3%	1,926
OTHER	2.7%	2.2%	1.9%	0.4%	1.1%	0.7%	6.7%	2.2%	109
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	5,025

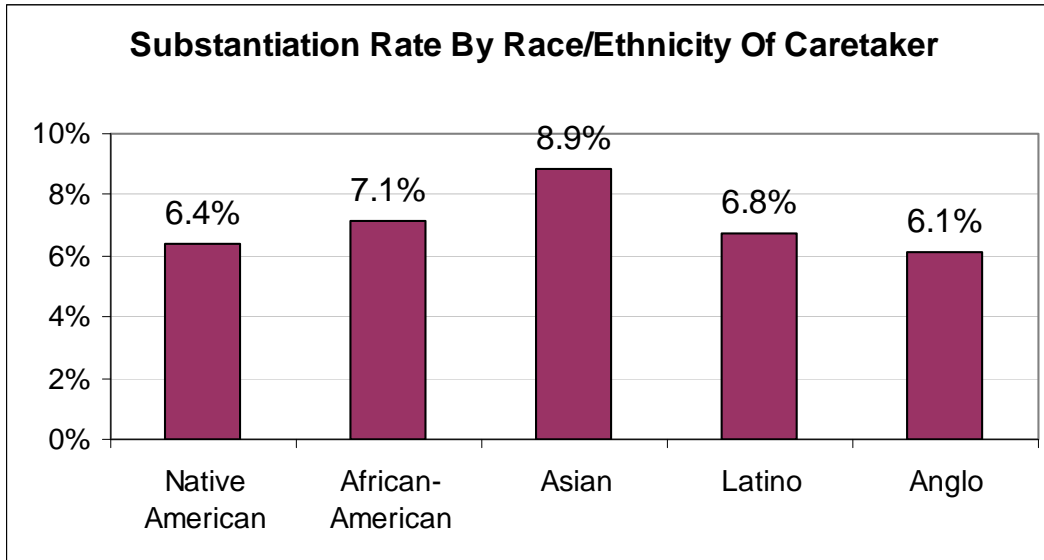
- Native American and African-American children are overrepresented in residential treatment.
- Latino children are overrepresented in runaways.
- Anglo children are underrepresented in unlicensed relative homes.

Figure 8



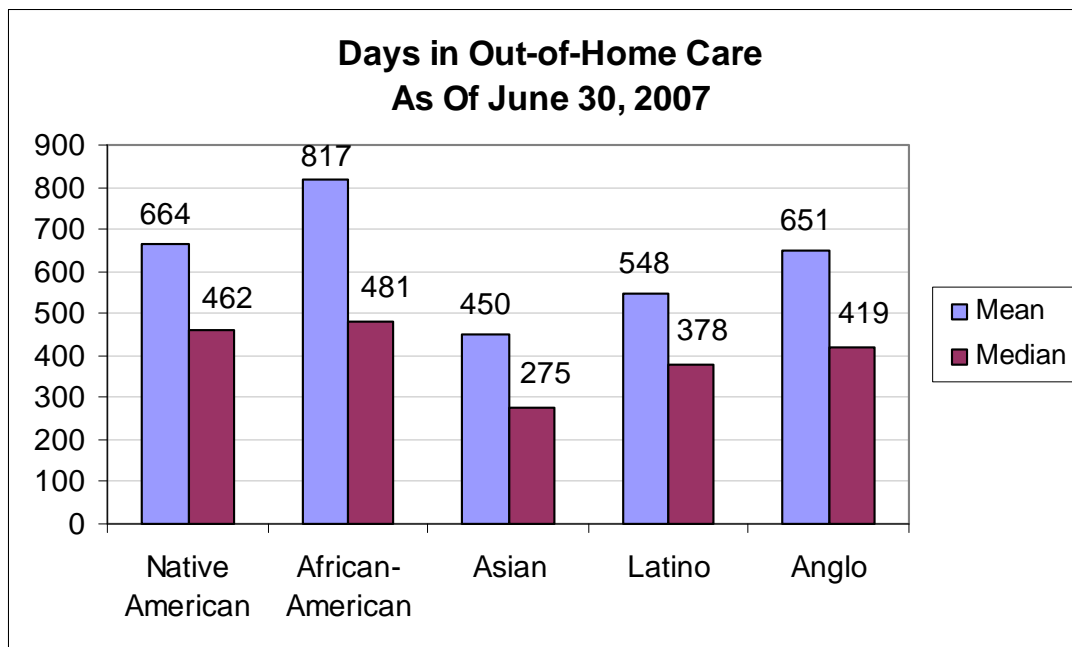
- Latino children are most likely of all groups in out-of-home care to be in an unlicensed relative home.
- Asian and Latino children are the least likely to be in independent living of all groups in out-of-home care.
- Children of Asian descent are the most likely to be in a licensed family foster home.

Figure 9



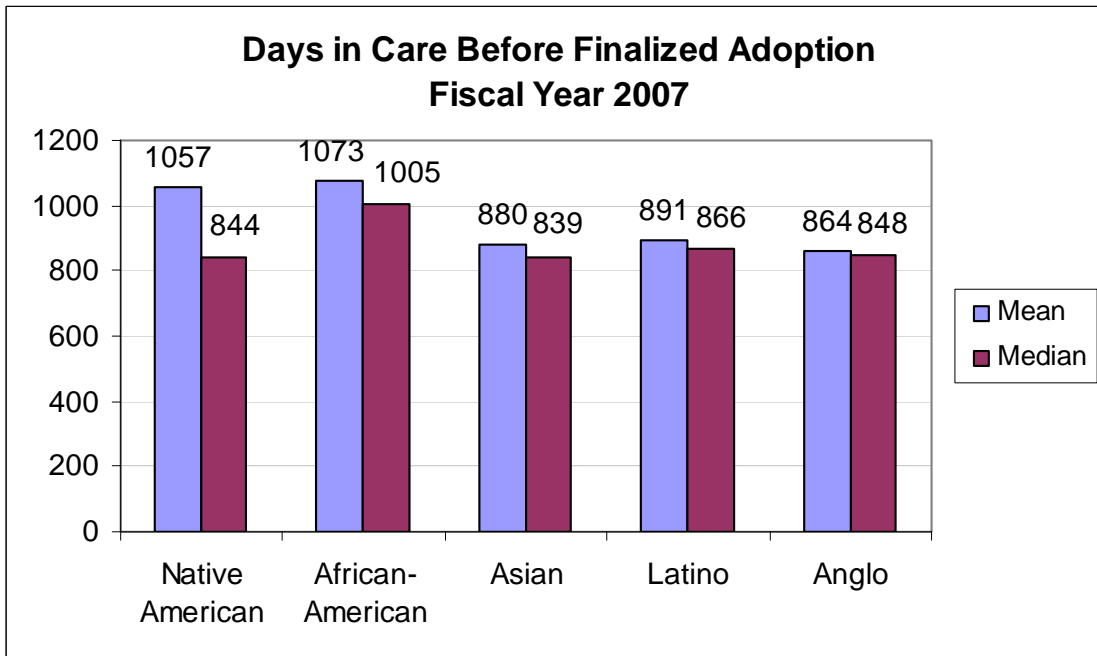
- The substantiation rate (the number of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect divided by the total number of reports of child abuse or neglect) is higher for all communities of color than for Anglos.
- The substantiation rate is calculated based on the race/ethnicity of the caretaker, not of the child.

Figure 10



- Data represent the mean (average) and median numbers of days in out-of-home care for those children in out-of-home care on June 30, 2007.
- Mean and median time in out-of-home care was greatest for Native American and African-American youth.
- Children of Asian descent had the fewest days in out-of-home care
- Latino children had fewer days in out-of-home care than Anglo children.

Figure 11



- Data represent the mean and median days in out-of-home care before finalized adoption during State Fiscal Year 2007 for youth adopted by race/ethnicity.
- The mean and median days in out-of-home care before a finalized adoption is greatest for African-American youth. The mean (but not median) days in out-of-home care before a finalized adoption is higher for Native American youth than Asian, Latino, and Anglo youth, who have similar time in out-of-home care before adoption.

## Appendix

Raw numbers on child welfare in Maricopa County:

	Native American	African-American	Asian	Latino	Anglo	Total*
Overall child population (Maricopa County)	20,748	49,005	25,727	435,538	476,644	1,028,885
Reports of abuse/neglect (by child)	1,204	3,188	359	8,969	9,521	24,524
Reports of abuse/neglect (by caretaker race)	848	2,117	271	6,284	9,009	19,518
Substantiations (by caretaker race)	54	151	24	425	552	1,249
Children receiving in-home services (Feb 08)	120	312	26	905	1,099	2,778
Children in out-of-home care	322	843	29	1,796	1,926	5,025

\*Total includes those whose race/ethnicity is "other."

Children in out-of-home care by placement type:

Single Race	Foster Family Home - Non Relative	Foster Family Home - Relative	Group Home	Residential Treatment	Runaway	Independent Living	Trial Home Visit	Total
Native American	145	73	46	40	11	7	0	322
African-American	324	252	102	104	27	31	3	843
Asian	15	8	1	3	2	0	0	29
Latino	679	637	215	151	80	25	7	1,796
Anglo	834	513	250	187	62	75	4	1,926
Other	56	34	12	2	2	1	1	109