RACE MATTERS
IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

While the reasons for disproportionality are multifaceted and complex, race affects the child welfare system. While there is little data on the Canadian context, American data offers insights into the experiences of, and outcomes for, African Canadians in Ontario's child welfare system.
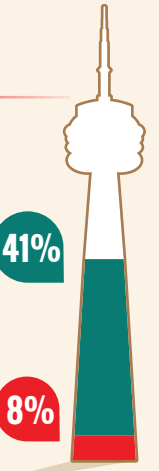
2011

There are **539,205** African Canadians in Ontario, making up **4%** of the provincial population.[1]

While African Canadians represent **8%** of the Toronto population, they represent **41%** of all children and youth in care of the Toronto Children's Aid Society.[2]

41%

8%

2031

Statistics Canada projects that by 2031 the African Canadian population could double in size.[3]

5X

African Canadians are over-represented in care at **5** times their representation in the population.
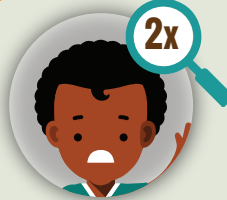
ENTRY TO THE SYSTEM

Entry to the System

There are no significant differences in the overall incidence of child maltreatment between Whites and people of African descent. However, professionals and individuals are more likely to report people of African descent than Whites to child welfare.[4]

2x When a report to child welfare has been made, people of African descent are investigated twice as often as Whites.[6]

Poverty, not the type or severity of maltreatment, is the single most important predictor of placement in foster care and the amount of time spent there.[5]
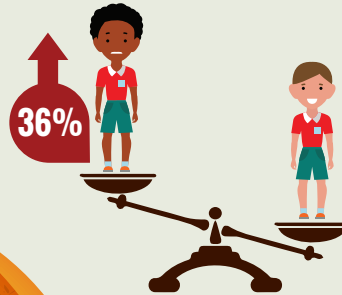
2X White children who are abused or neglected are twice as likely as children of African descent to receive services in their own homes.[7]

IN THE SYSTEM

In the System

Children of African descent remain in foster care longer, move more often, receive fewer services, and are less likely to be returned to their home or adopted.[9]
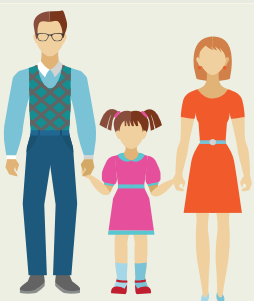
36% When an investigation is found to have been substantiated, children of African descent are 36% more likely than White children to be placed into foster care.[8]

Most White children who enter the system are permitted to stay with their families, whereas most children of African descent are taken away from theirs. Child welfare for children of African descent usually means shattering the bonds with their parents.[10]

EXITING THE SYSTEM

Exiting the System

Children of African descent exit foster care most frequently through adoption or "aging out" of the system. White children exit most frequently through reunification with families.[11]

There are a number of negative outcomes for children of African descent who remain in foster and institutional care until they "age out" of the system, including: not completing high school, teen pregnancy, homelessness, unemployment and involvement with the criminal justice system. They also experience isolation from family, culture and community.[12]

Data Sources

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6- Y. Yaun, J. Fluke, J. Hedderson and P. Curtis, "Disproportionate Representation of Race and Ethnicity in Child Maltreatment: Investigation and Victimization," Children and Youth Services Review, 25 (2003): 359-373

7- D. Roberts. Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare. New York: 2002. p 17
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12- National Bar Association Presidential Showcase Panel. The Child Welfare to Prison Pipeline: Profiling Black Families, Black Parents and Black Children. July 29, 2014.

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