Department of Children, Youth and Families
Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare

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What is Racial Disproportionality?

Disproportionality is defined as…..

The underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group compared to its percentage in the total population*

Math of disproportionality

- Numerator=# of children of each racial group experiencing an event (e.g. CW intake)

- Denominator=# of children of each racial group in the population

- Disproportionality Ratio:
    - % children experiencing event of interest of one racial group ÷
    - % total child population that racial group represents
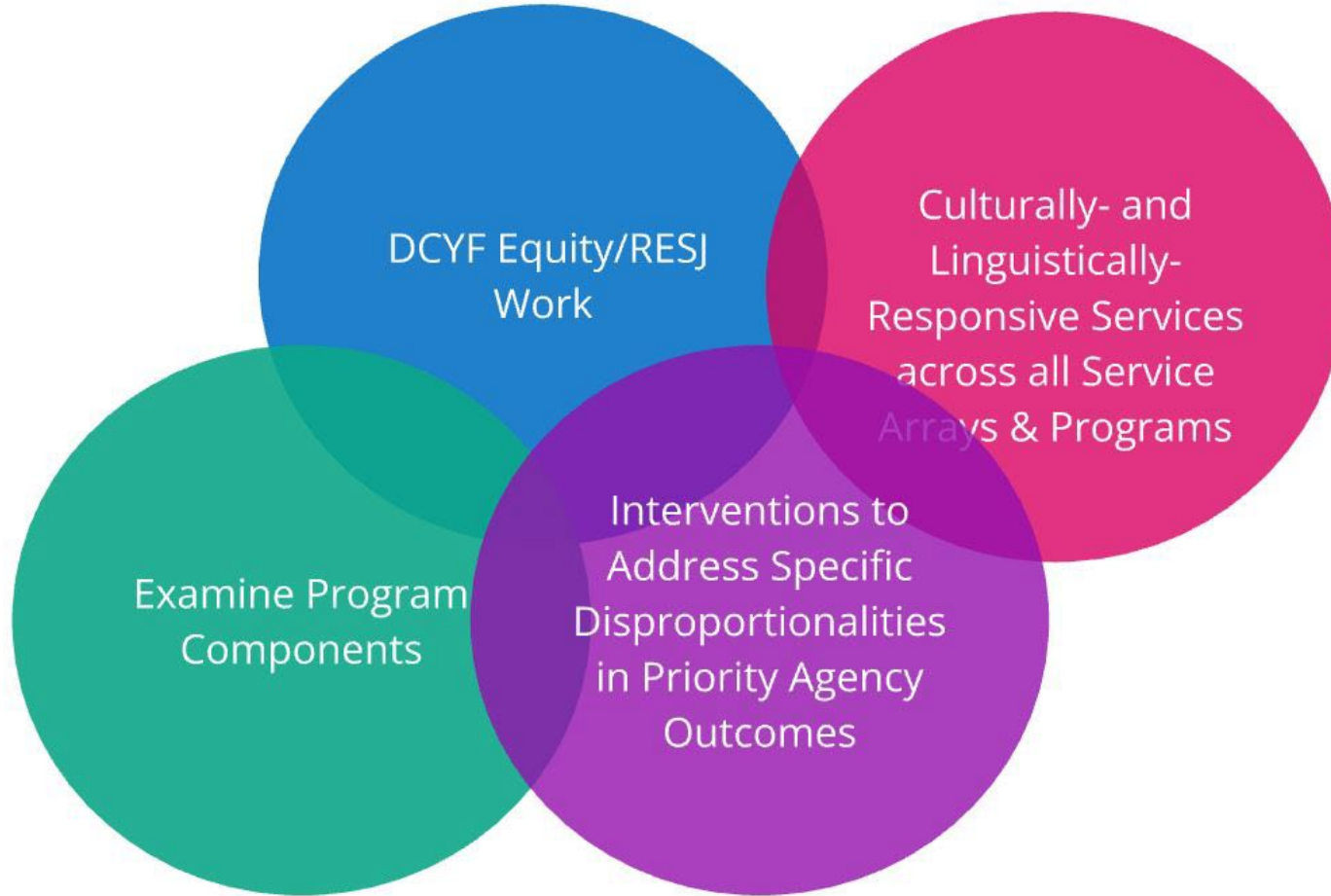
Not DCYF Alone

- Racial disproportionality, or inequity, exists in many social outcomes in the US, with Native and Black children & families often experiencing greater disproportionality

- Inequities in educational outcomes, health inequities, etc.

- DCYF serves children/families who exist first in the context of their communities, well before they ever come to the attention of our systems.

*from OIAA's 2021 report "Using Data to Advance Racial Equity in DCYF". OIAA is responsible for maintaining data, developing standards, and reporting authoritative data on racial disproportionalities in DCYF's systems and services.

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Critical Elements of DCYF Equity Work

DCYF Equity/RESJ Work

Culturally- and Linguistically- Responsive Services across all Service Arrays & Programs

Examine Program Components

Interventions to Address Specific Disproportionalities in Priority Agency Outcomes

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While all of these bodies of work are necessary for DCYF to achieve its purpose, neither broad agency equity work nor culturally responsive services *by themselves* will be sufficient to eliminate racial disproportionalities in priority agency outcomes.

Eliminating racial disproportionalities in priority agency outcomes requires -
1. an understanding of the causes of those disproportionalities,
2. understanding best practices in addressing them, and
3. Implementing specific interventions at sufficient scale

Causes of Racial Disproportionality in DCYF Systems
Research Perspectives

- Social determinants perspective –
  - Native, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino families with children experience disproportionately high rates of poverty
  - Institutional, systemic, and historic racism exclude communities of color from opportunity
  - Many Washington's Hispanic/Latino children live with immigrant parents with low education levels. While these families confer many strengths, their children may be more likely to be underserved by the educational system.

- Surveillance perspective –
  - Child welfare is historically part of the carceral state, Native and Black communities may be over-surveilled by mandatory reporters and subject to bias
  - Communities with concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage, often communities of color, experience over-surveillance by law enforcement which results in higher rates of arrest, police violence, and community psychological distress

- Differential Treatment/ Support perspective –
  - If bias or inequity are present in assessments, family engagement, and decision-making, systems of care can amplify disproportionalities.

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Best Practices in Addressing Racial Disproportionalities in DCYF Systems

- Incorporate protective effects of culture and language into services and supports

- High quality assessment and engagement with children, youth, families, communities, and tribal partners

- Access to high-quality, appropriate services (including geographic targeting and/or culturally-specific services)

- Support cross-system collaboration

- Workforce development

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(2021) Strategies to Advance Racial Equity: Literature Review, DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability

Early Learning

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Racial Disproportionalities in Kindergarten Readiness Outcome Measure for DCYF

Statewide K-Readiness, by Race/Ethnicity

Data Source:
OSPI Washington State Report Card
WSRDAC/M=No
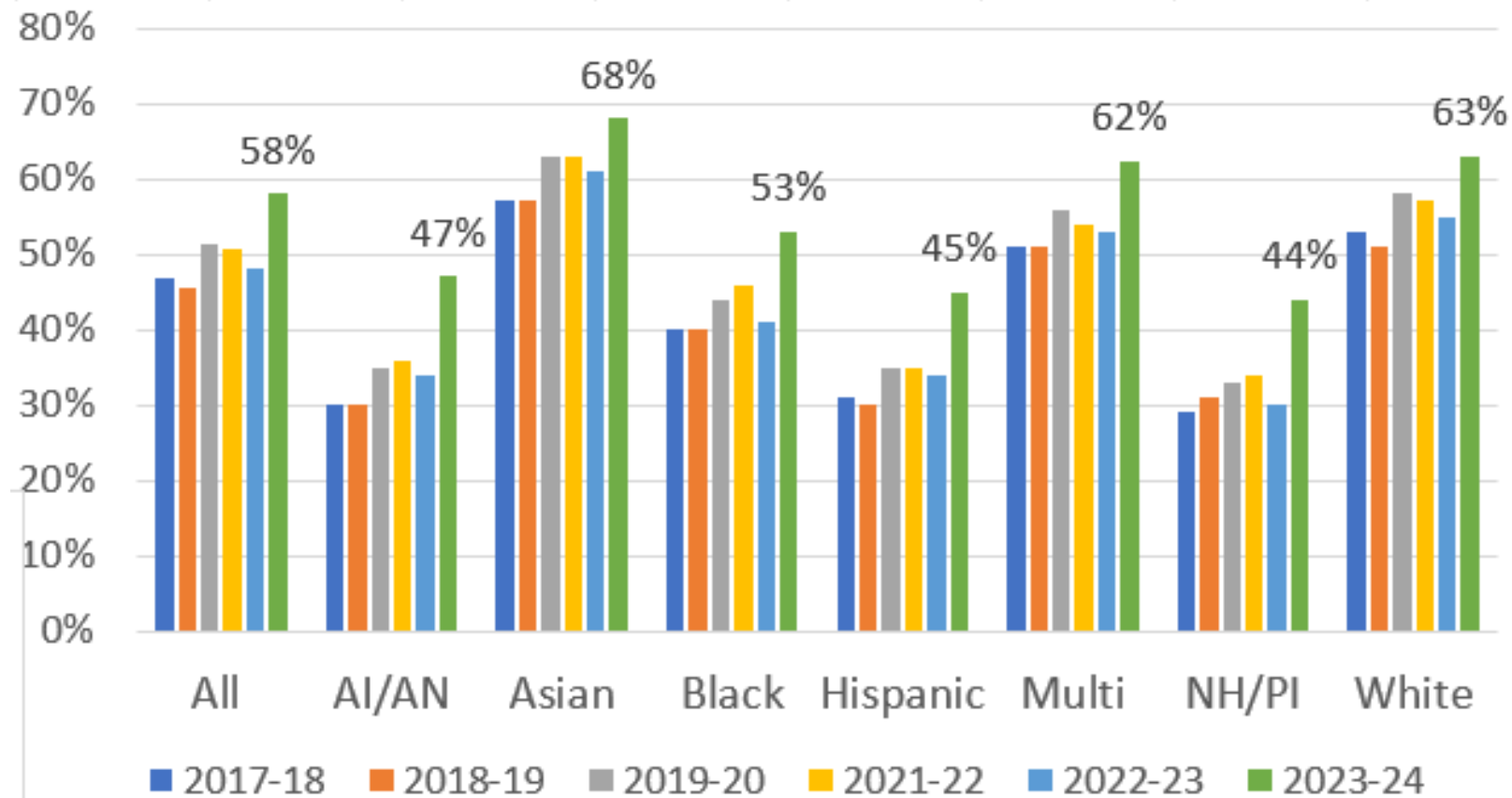
Disproportionality Ratio in ECEAP Enrollment
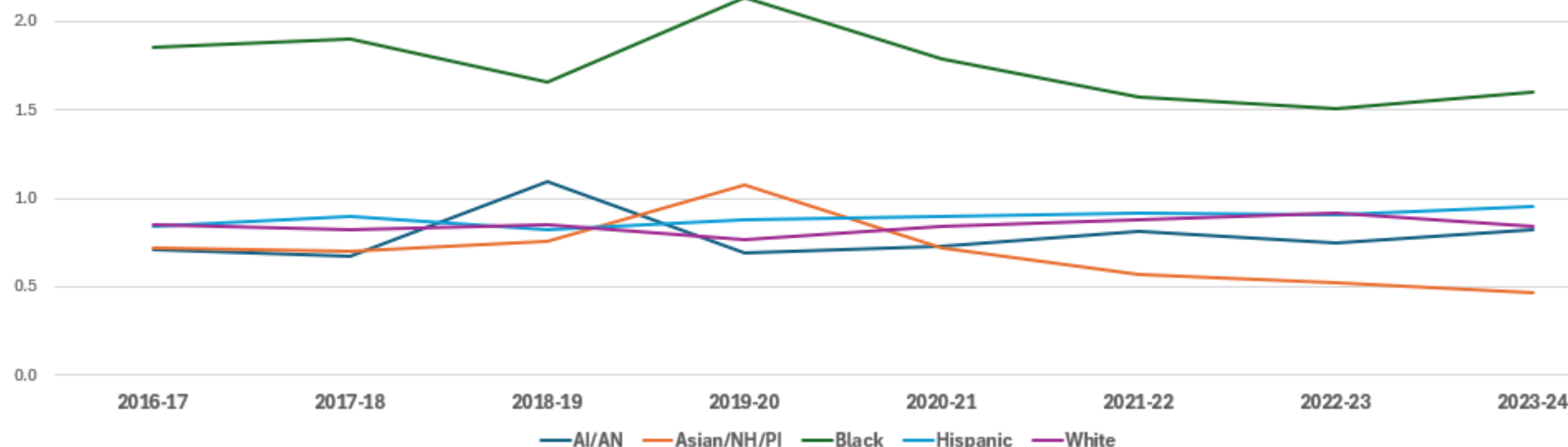## High Quality Pre-K as Intervention to Improve K-Readiness
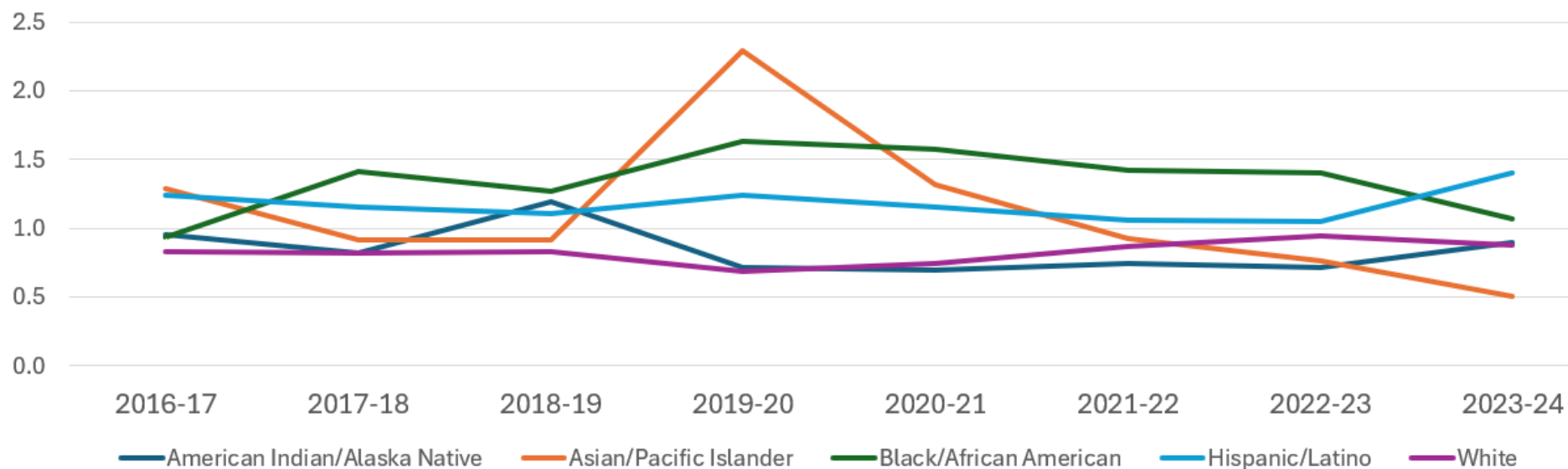
Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality Ratio of ECEAP Enrollment; age 3-4; 2016-23 (ratio)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.95	0.82	1.20	0.72	0.69	0.75	0.72	0.90
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.29	0.91	0.92	2.30	1.32	0.93	0.76	0.51
Black/African American	0.94	1.41	1.27	1.63	1.57	1.42	1.40	1.07
Hispanic/Latino	1.24	1.16	1.10	1.24	1.16	1.06	1.05	1.41
White	0.83	0.82	0.83	0.68	0.74	0.87	0.94	0.88

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Disproportionality Ratio in Subsidy Enrollment
High Quality Early Learning as Intervention to Improve K-Readiness

Racial and ethnic disproportionality ratio of subsidy enrollment; ages 0-5; 2016-23 (ratio)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
AI/AN	0.71	0.68	1.09	0.69	0.73	0.82	0.75	0.83
Asian/NH/PI	0.72	0.70	0.76	1.07	0.72	0.57	0.52	0.47
Black	1.85	1.90	1.66	2.14	1.79	1.57	1.50	1.61
Hispanic	0.84	0.90	0.82	0.88	0.90	0.91	0.91	0.95
White	0.85	0.82	0.85	0.77	0.84	0.88	0.91	0.84

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Best Practices
Geographic Targeting

Schools with Highest # AI/AN, Black/AA, Hispanic, and NH/PI children not K Ready, 2022

School	District	# BIPOC Not K Ready
Sun Valley Elementary	Sunnyside SD	221
Pathfinder Kinder Center	Mukilteo SD	151
Camas Elementary	Wapato SD	127
Impact Puget Sound Elem	Impact PS	101
Impact Salish Sea Elem	Impact PS	100
Red Rock Elem	Royal SD	88
Simcoe Elem	Wapato SD	77
Keene-Riverview Elem	Prosser SD	75
Robert Lince EL Center	Selah SD	72
Impact Commencement Bay	Impact PS	71

These data could also be disaggregated by each group to inform specific interventions

- Because we live in a segregated state, often in segregated communities, K-Readiness by race/ethnicity is not equally distributed statewide
- These communities represent opportunities for support
- We know from the 2023 FSKA Evaluation that we can improve access to high-quality early learning by targeting supports in high-need communities
- These are the numerators in the statewide disproportionality equation – eliminating disproportionality in K-Readiness statewide cannot happen without reducing these numbers in these communities (and others).

Data Source:
Report Card WaKids 2022-23 School Year | Data.WA | State of Washington

What DCYF is Doing to Address Racial Disproportionalities in Early Learning

Culturally-and Linguistically-Responsive Services

- Dual Language Designation and Tribal Language Revitalization

- Language Access Coordinators and translation of communications into numerous languages

- Early Achievers pathway specific to Tribal programs

- Early Childhood Equity Grant projects advancing culturally and linguistically responsive practices

- Preferred oral and written language captured in WA Compass and MERIT data systems

Workforce Supports

- Community-based pathway to meet staff qualifications and meets the linguistic and cultural needs of Washington's diverse workforce

- System navigators who speak multiple languages to assist Providers navigate professional development

- Culturally and linguistically affirming relationship-based professional development (Early Achievers coaches and Imagine Institute mentors)

- Washington Pyramid Model and Trauma Informed Care, a framework that can buffer the impact of trauma and promote healing

- Multi-lingual Licensing and Child Care Subsidy Call Center staff

Targeted Investments

- Expand access to high quality early learning (subsidy and ECEAP) in targeted geographic areas with highest numbers of BIPOC children not ready for Kindergarten

- ECEAP's No Expulsion Policy

- Complex Needs Fund promotes inclusive environments, and supports children with complex needs

- Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation which aims to address the disproportionate incidents of suspension and expulsion for children of color

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Child Welfare

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Disproportionality & Disparity in Child Welfare

Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability
Agency Performance - Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare Dashboard

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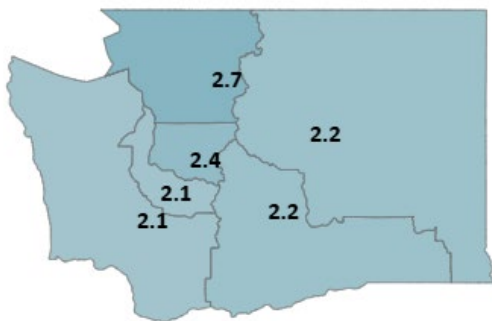
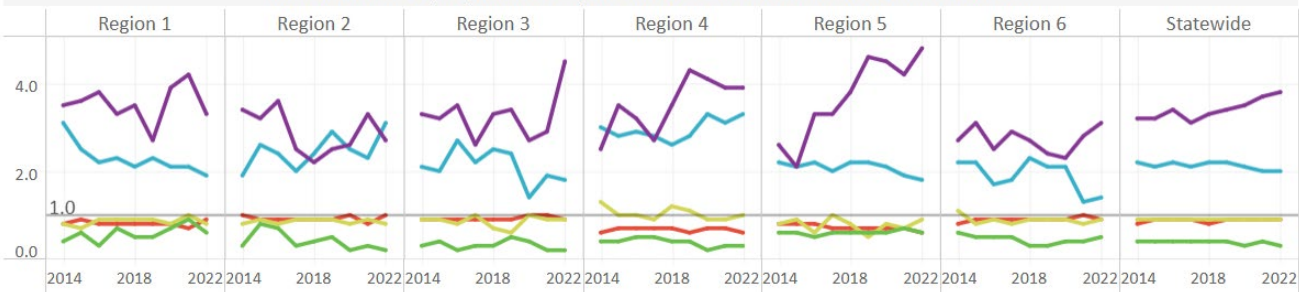| Intakes | Screen-Ins | Removals | Placement within One Year | Care Lasting 2+ Years |

dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity/disproportionality-disparity-cw
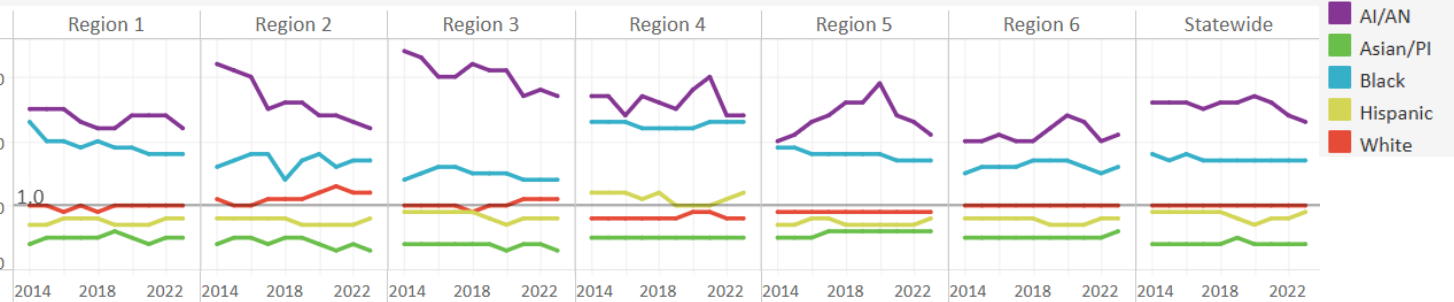
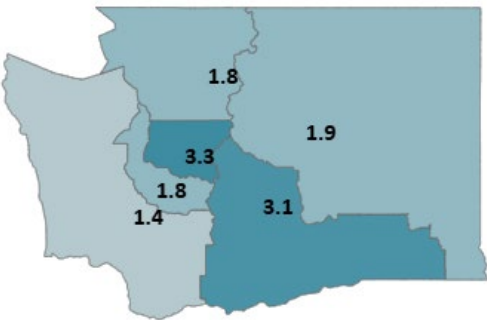Disproportionality in All Intakes for Year 2023 - AI/AN

Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality Ratios for Child Welfare Removals - Overall*

Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality Ratios for All Child Welfare Intakes (Screened Out and Screened-In)*

Race/Ethnicity
- AI/AN
- Asian/PI
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

Disproportionality in Removals for Year 2022 - Black - Overall

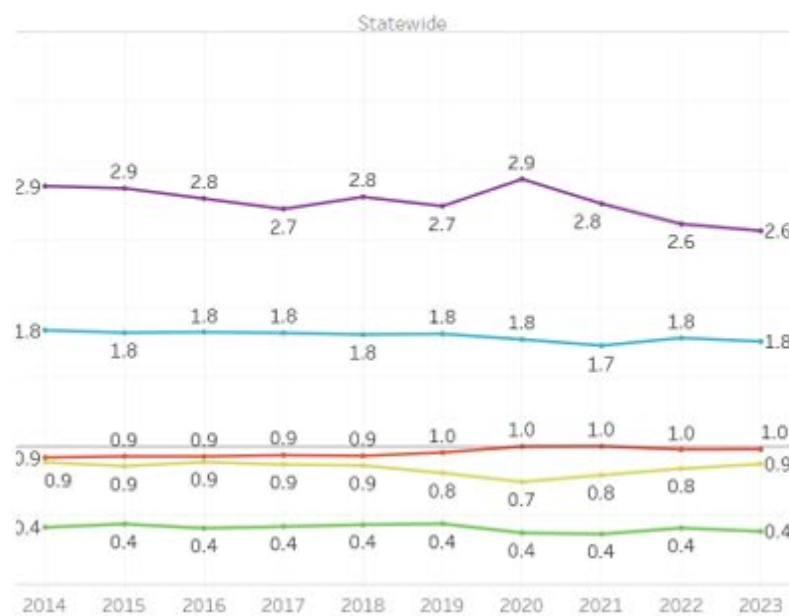Washington State Department of
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American Indian/Alaska Native and Black children are disproportionately represented in child welfare

AI/AN and Black children experience disproportionately higher rates of intakes, screen-ins, and removals, than do white, Asian, and Hispanic children.

Disproportionality Ratios for All Child Welfare Intakes (Screened Out and Screened-In) — Statewide

Disproportionality Ratios for Screened-In Child Welfare Intakes — Statewide

Disproportionality Ratios for Child Welfare Removals — Statewide

Race/Ethnicity
- AI/AN
- Asian/PI
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

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DCYF Agency Performance Metrics
Denominators=all children B-17 in Washington State, by race/ethnicity
WSRDAC/M=Yes

Disproportionality in the system is driven the disproportionalities in intakes:

Vast majority of disproportionalities in placements are attributable to disproportionalities in intakes: 70% for AI/AN and 89% for Black/African American children in 2023

Attributable % = DR All Intakes ÷ DR Removals, by group

Poverty is Single Largest Population Risk Factor for Child Welfare System Involvement & Child Maltreatment

Research

- National research shows the population-level relationship between poverty and child welfare involvement has grown stronger over time (Kim & Drake, 2023).
- In Washington, about 20% of families involved in child welfare system are 'economically disconnected' from either work or public assistance (DCYF Family First Needs Assessment, 2022).
- Income support programs can be important population-level interventions to prevent child welfare system involvement and child maltreatment:
  - Minimum Wage (Raissian & Bullinger, 2017)
  - SNAP (Johnson-Motoyama et al, 2022)
  - Child Tax Credits (Bullinger & Boy, 2023)

Relationship Between Poverty & Entry into Care 2015-2023, WA

Legend: Ch in HH <200% FPL · Ch Entering Out-of-Home Care
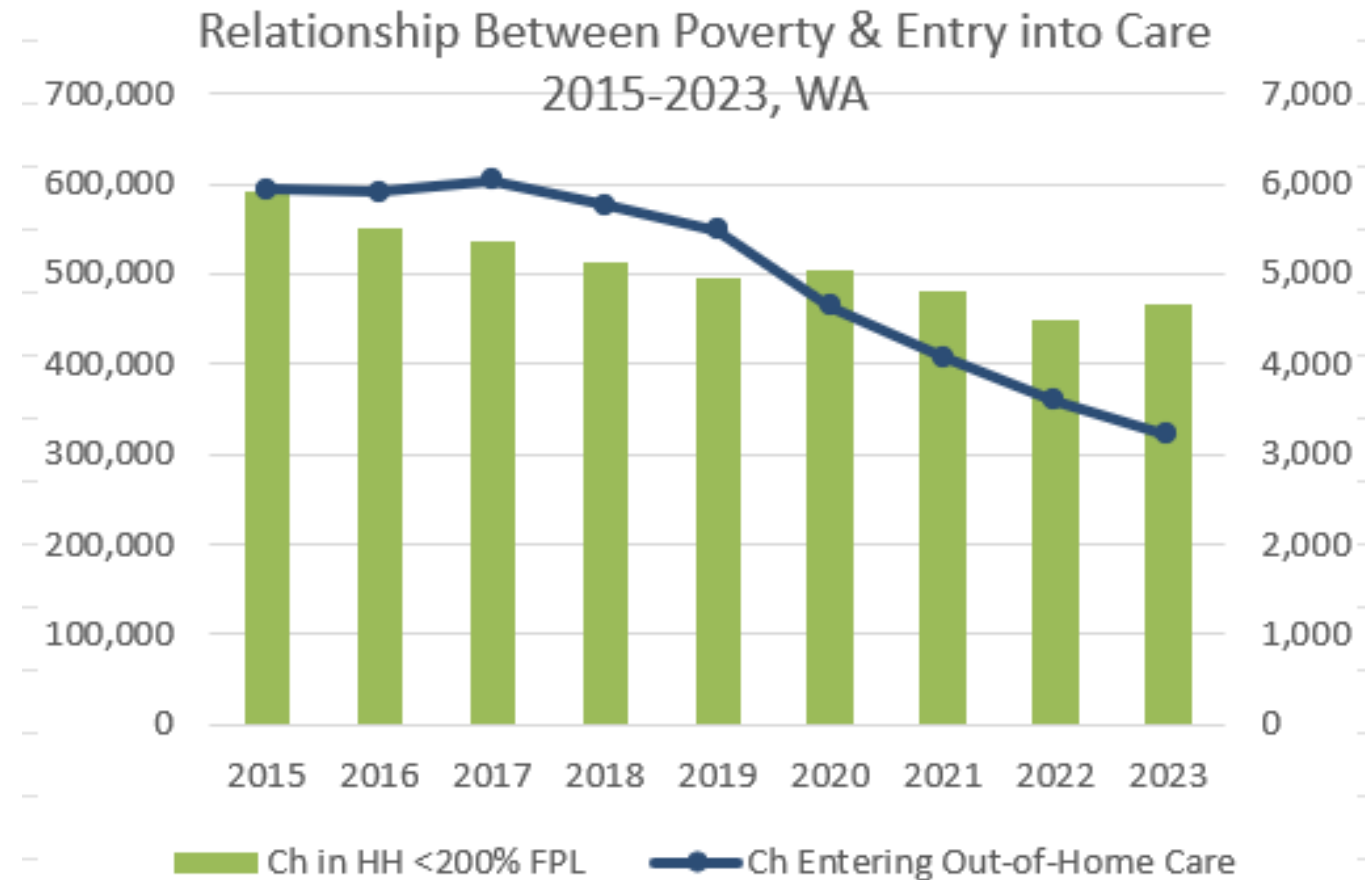
Child Poverty Data from Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year Estimates

Entry into Care from:

Child Welfare Agency Performance Dashboard | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Family poverty is a key factor in disproportionality for Native and Black children

- Disproportionality for Native and Black children decreases by 26%-27% when we adjust for population-level poverty, but it doesn't disappear.

- If AI/AN and Black/African American children did not experience higher rates of poverty, we would expect to see lower rates of disproportionality.

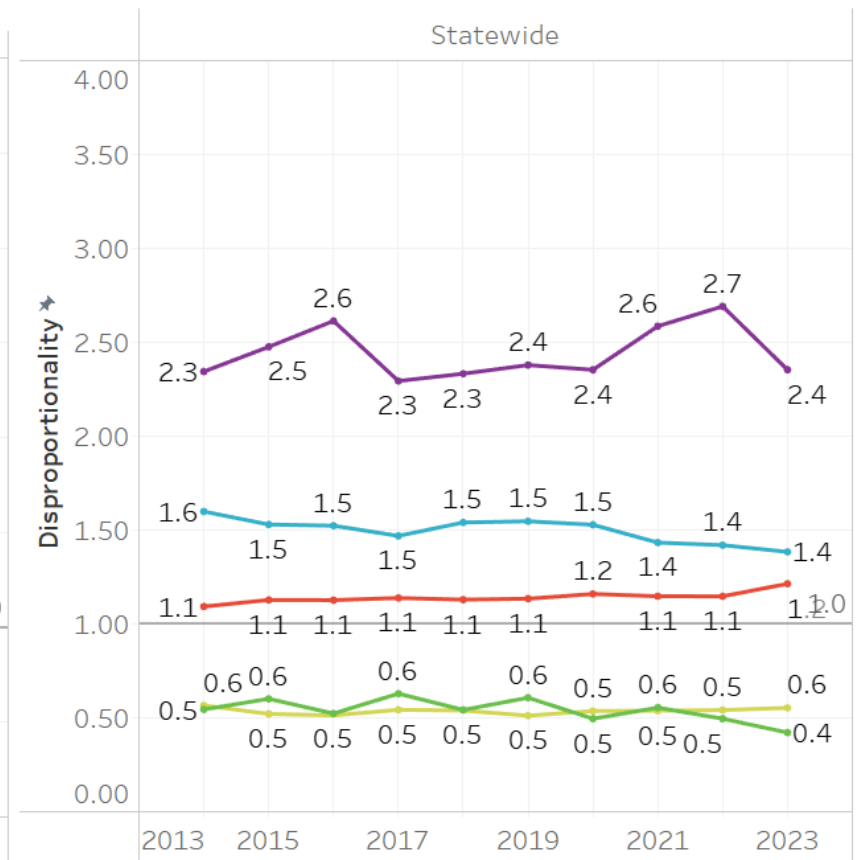
Disproportionality Ratios for Child Welfare Removals
(Income: ALL)
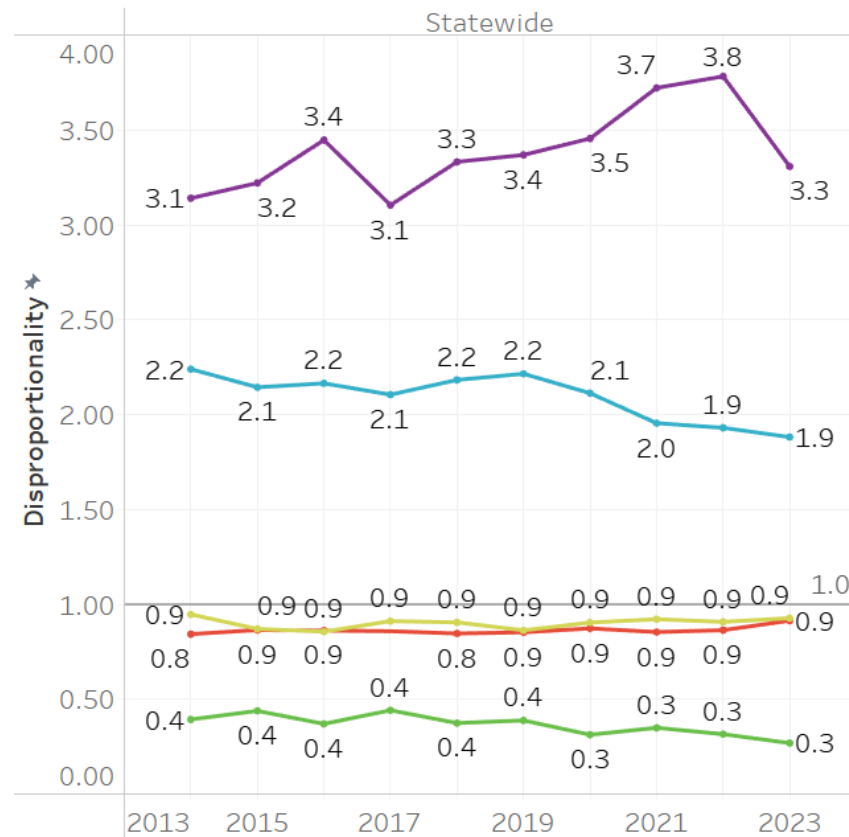
Disproportionality Ratios for Child Welfare Removals
(Income: <=200%FPL)

Race/Ethnicity
- AI/AN
- Asian/PI
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

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Black & Native families present to DCYF with greater safety concerns, on average, than white, Asian, and Hispanic children/families

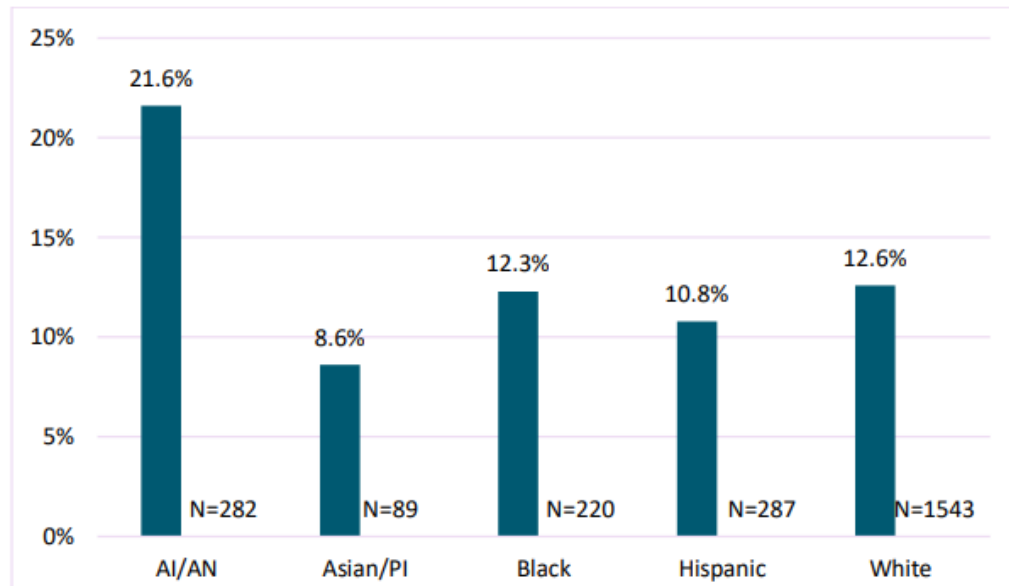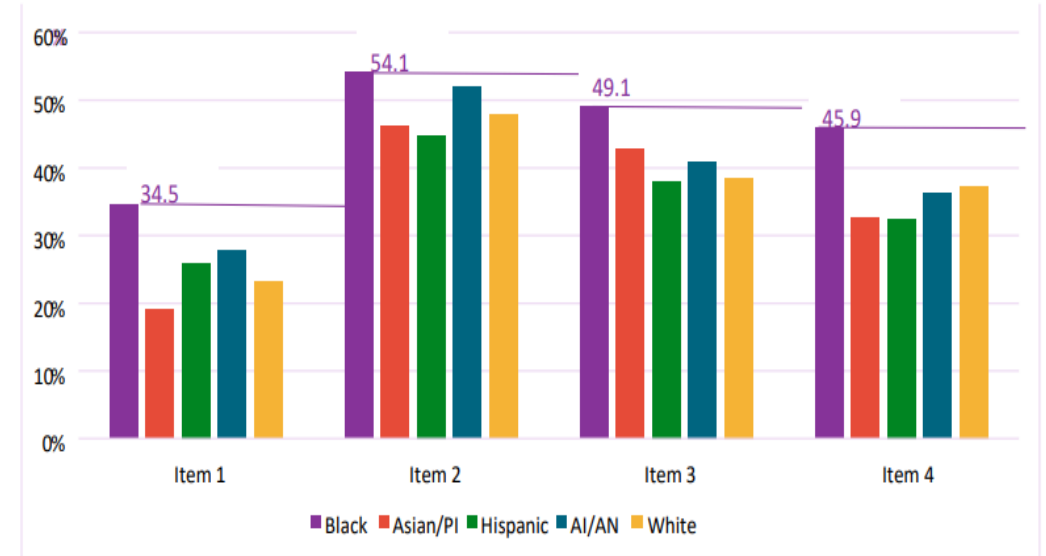**Figure 1. Caregiver(s) having Concern "indicated" on any of 17 Safety Assessment items, by race[2]**

Figure 4. Caregiver "indicated" with Uncontrolled Safety Threat on Safety Plan Analysis items 1 – 4 (of families with Safety Assessment)[3]

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(2022) Examination of the Racial Disparities Present in Child Welfare Assessment of Safety

Evidence of Progress on Racial Disproportionality

- Fewer Native and Black children are entering out-of-home care now than ever before.

- Fewer Native and Black children are living in poverty in Washington than a decade ago ([DCYF Economic Stability Indicator](#)).

- Disproportionality Ratio for removals for both AI/AN and Black children decreased in CY 2023 compared to previous years (both adjusted for poverty and unadjusted)

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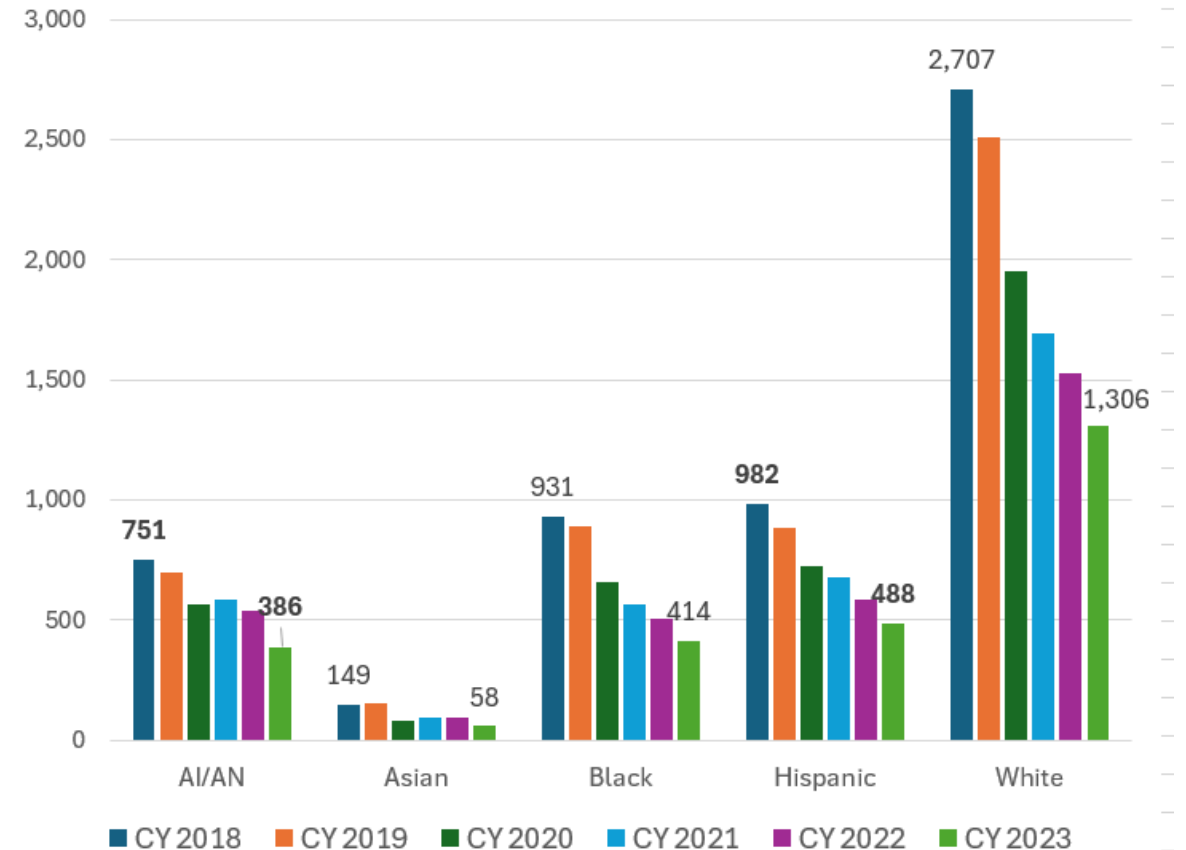
WSRDAC/M-Yes; AI/AN and Black categories include respective Multiracial
Data Source: DCYF infoFamLink Entry/Exit Reporting

Best Practices: Kinship Placements

- We see no/little disproportionality in kinship placements for AI/AN and Black children.
- In fact DCYF (and the previous Children's Administration) has a strong history of kinship placements for children of color

Figure 2. Children <18 Experiencing Out-of-Home Care by Race/Ethnicity and Placement Setting, FY 2020

Legend: White, Unknown, Multiracial, Hispanic, Black, Asian/PI, AI/AN

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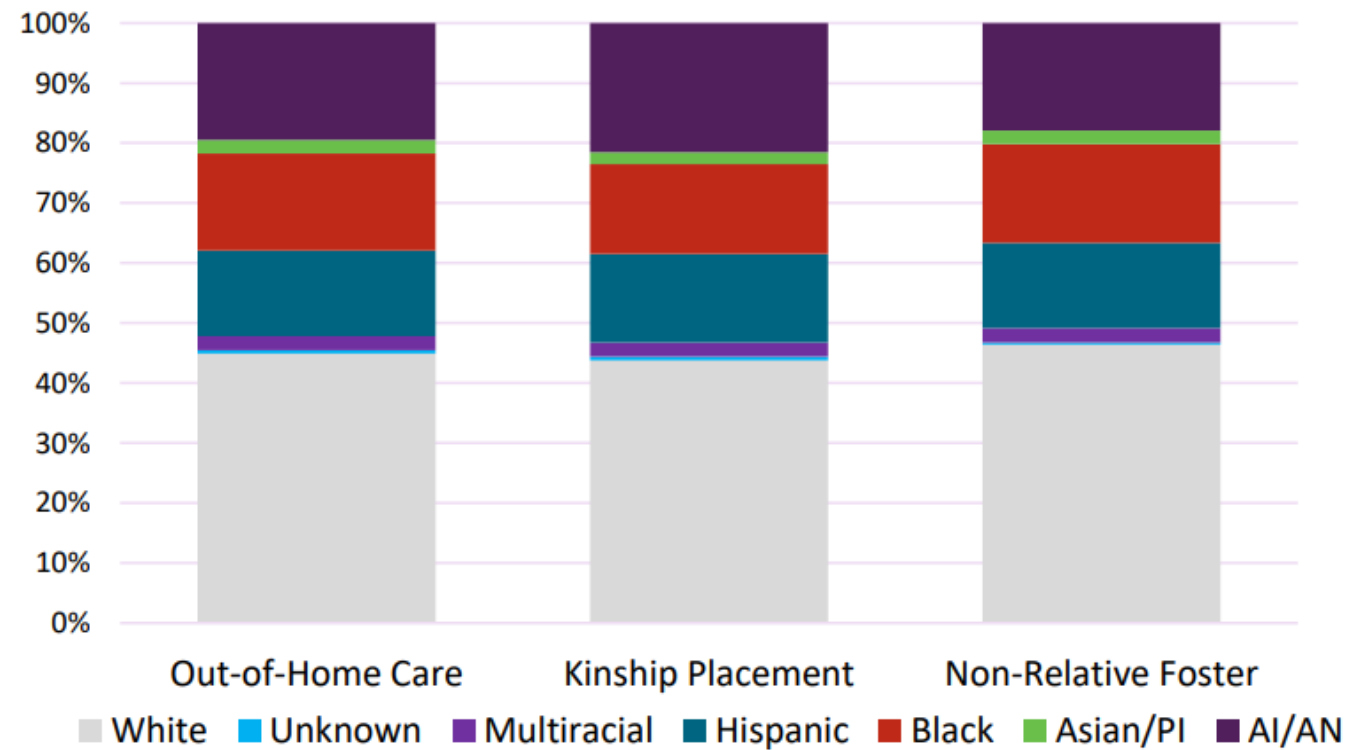
Best Practices: Geographic Targeting

Offices w/Highest Placements of Native & Black Children

Office	AI/AN Child Placements CY 2023
Spokane ICW	36
ICW R4	20
Spokane ICW	31
Olympia DCFS	18
Yakima	18
Tacoma	15
Spokane Central	14

Office	Black Child Placements CY 2023
Martin Luther King Jr. Office	41
King South-West	36
King West DCFS	19
R6 Centralized	17
Lakewood	15
Olympia DCFS	14

- Because we live in a segregated state and in segregated communities, entries into care by race/ethnicity are not equally distributed
- These numbers do not mean staff in these offices are doing anything different than staff in other offices, but rather a reflection of the communities they serve
- The communities served by these offices represent opportunities for preventive interventions
- These are the numerators in the statewide disproportionality equation – eliminating disproportionality statewide cannot happen without reducing these numbers in these offices

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WSRDAC/M=Yes; AI/AN and Black categories include respective Multiracial
Data Source: infoFamLink Entry/Exit Reporting, Entries

What Else DCYF is Doing to Address Racial Disproportionalities in Child Welfare

In Practice

- Updated Mandatory Reporter Training to address bias and make distinctions between poverty and neglect

- Examine and revise assessments to ensure validity with families of color, to reduce/eliminate bias in child welfare assessments

- Regional Child Welfare Disproportionality Leads examine local data and work on local practice

In Contracted Services

- Implement pilot for contracted culturally-specific prevention services in targeted communities with highest number of placements of Native and Black children

- Implement more active monitoring of service contracts around requirements to implement culturally and linguistically responsive services

- Increase concrete goods across DCYF programs, including developing training and education within DCYF on overlap between disproportionality and poverty

- Include language/cultural specialization information in caseworker-facing Statewide Service Directory of contracted service providers to support service matching

- Efforts toward high service penetration for Native and Black children among all child-welfare contracted services

- Efforts towards expansion among existing DCYF community-based prevention services targeting communities contributing most to Native and Black child placements

In Placements

- Kin-First approach, ensure children of color entering out-of-home care achieve kinship placement at high rates

- Targeted recruitment efforts to improve diversity of placement resources to help children/youth stay connected to cultures and communities

- Partner with Tribes on Tribal Nation Child Placing Agency (CPA) contracts and agreements, and in implementing new Caregiver Supports

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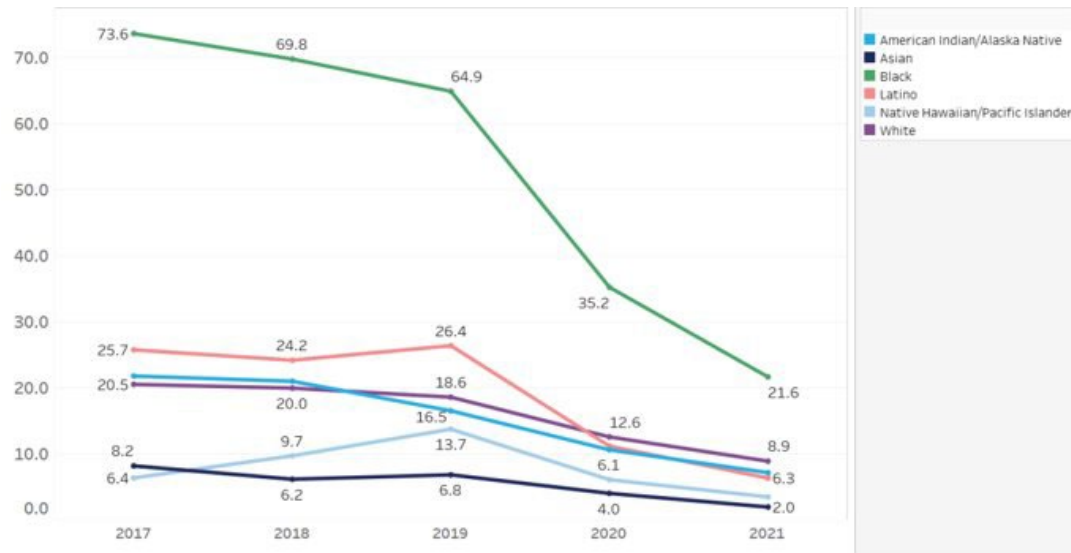**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**
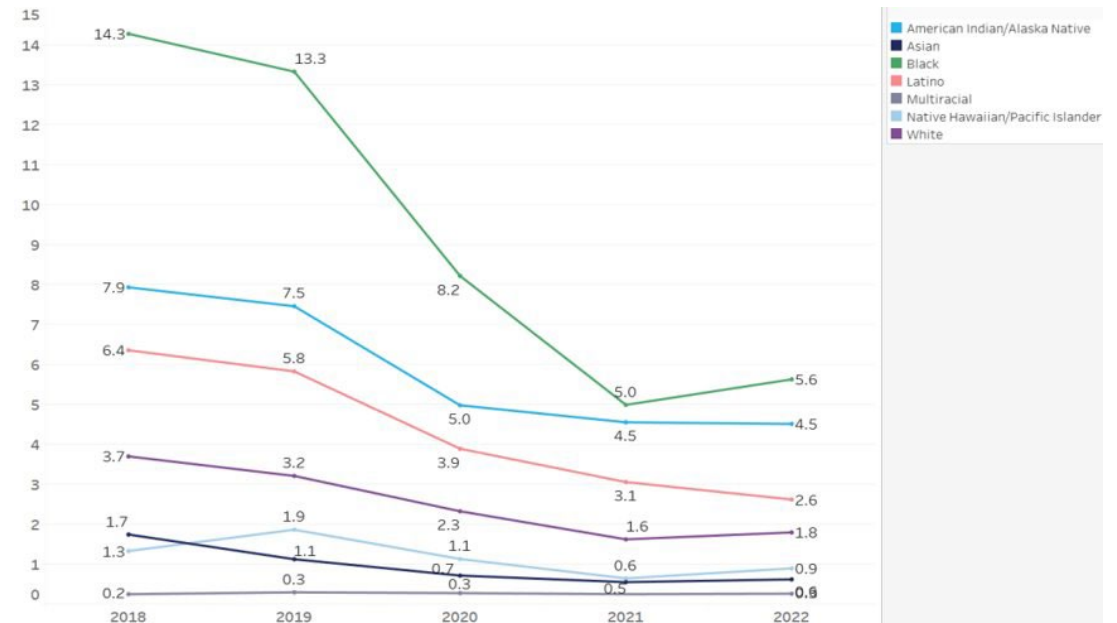
Juvenile Rehabilitation

What we Know about Racial Disproportionalities in Washington's Juvenile Rehabilitation System

Racial Disproportionality Compounds as Youth Move Through the System

Arrests rates per 1,000 youth by race/ethnicity, 2017-2021
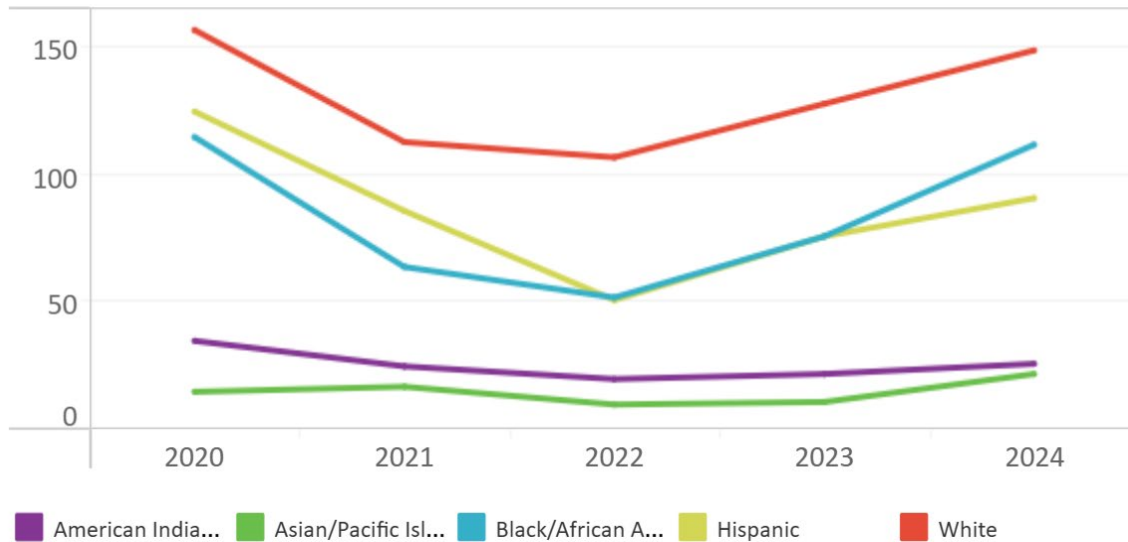
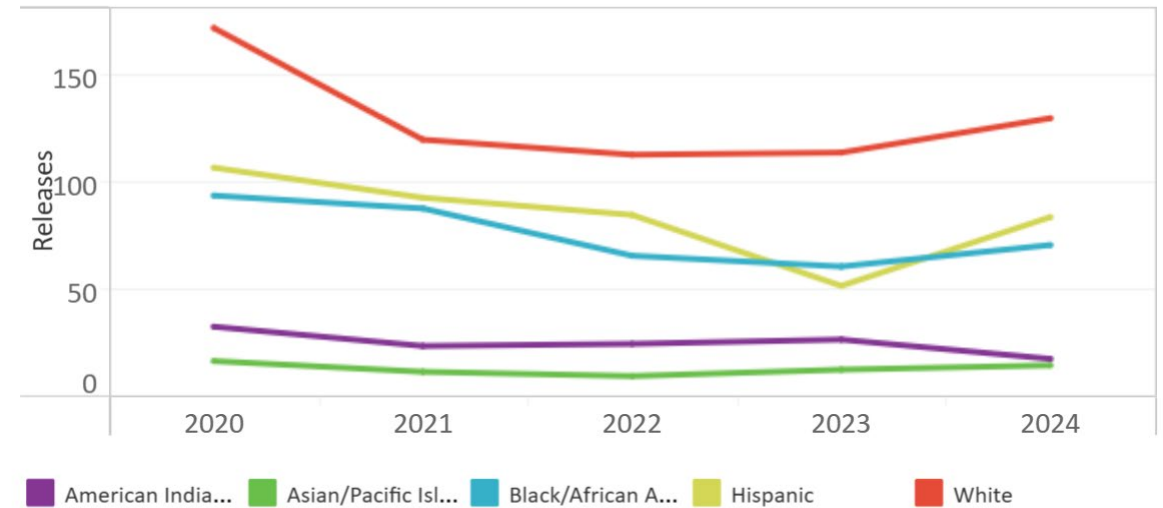Court adjudication rates per 1,000 youth by race/ethnicity, 2018-2022

https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/2024JJGovernorsReport.pdf

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DCYF JR Admissions and Releases by Race

Client Movement to and Release from a Community Facility by Racial Group (SFY17-22)

	Alaska Native/American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black/African American	Hispanic	White
Did not go to CF	64%	64%	60%	63%	66%
Released from a CF	29%	27%	23%	28%	25%
Went to a CF, but Did Not Release From One	7%	9%	17%	10%	9%

■ Went to a CF, but Did Not Release From One   ■ Released from a CF   ■ Did not go to CF

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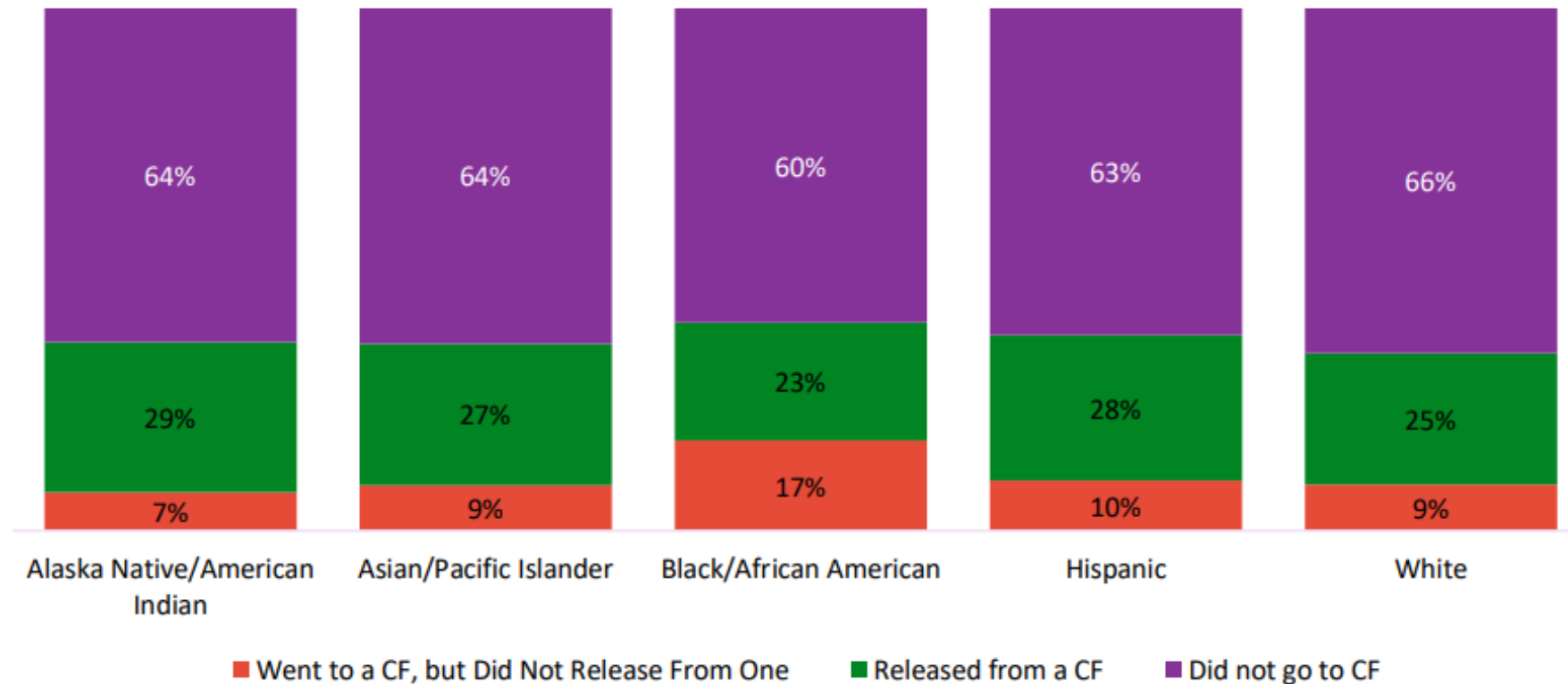
Percent of Obligation Spent at an Institution or Community Facility by Racial Group (SFY17-22)
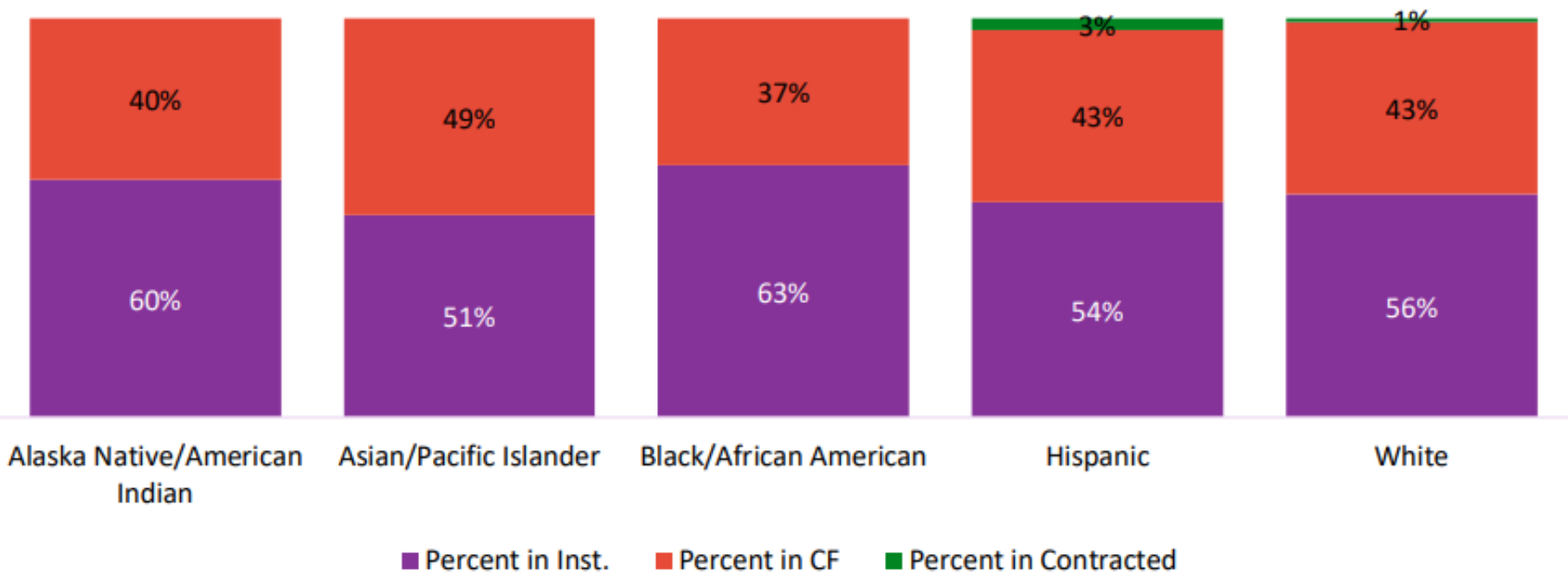
Black or African American clients spent a substantially lower percentage of their obligation in a community facility (CF) than any other racial group, an average of 37% compared to an average of 43% for other racial groups.

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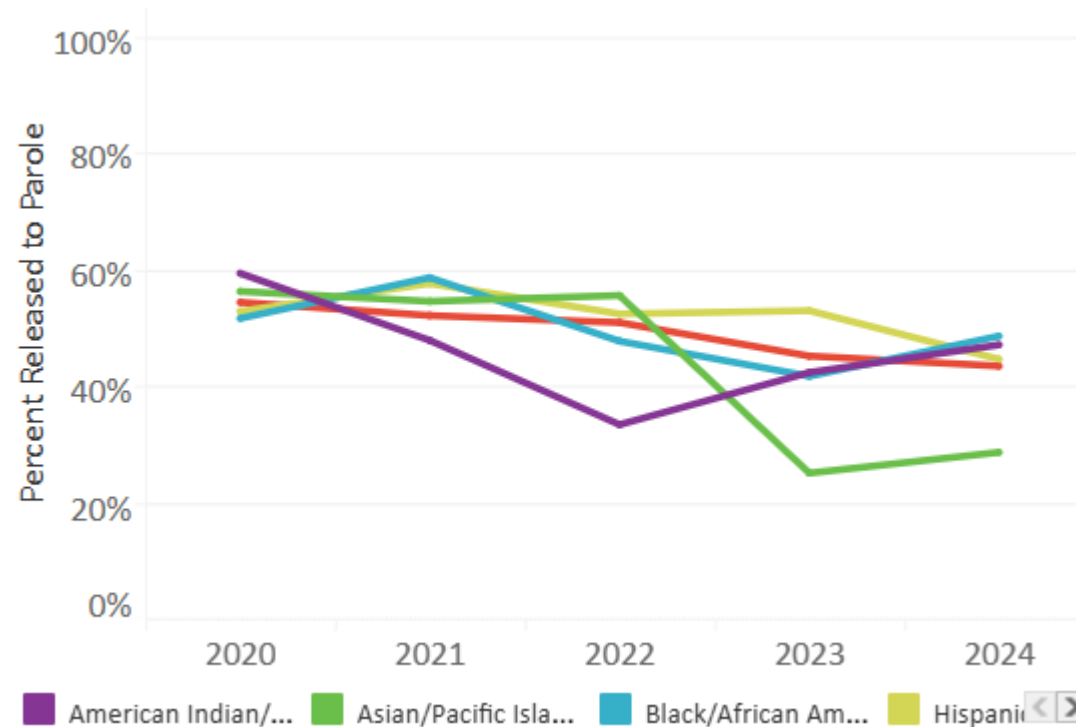
Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation. (August 2022). Automated Client Tracking (ACT) [2016-2022].

What we Know about Racial Disproportionalities in Washington's Juvenile Rehabilitation System

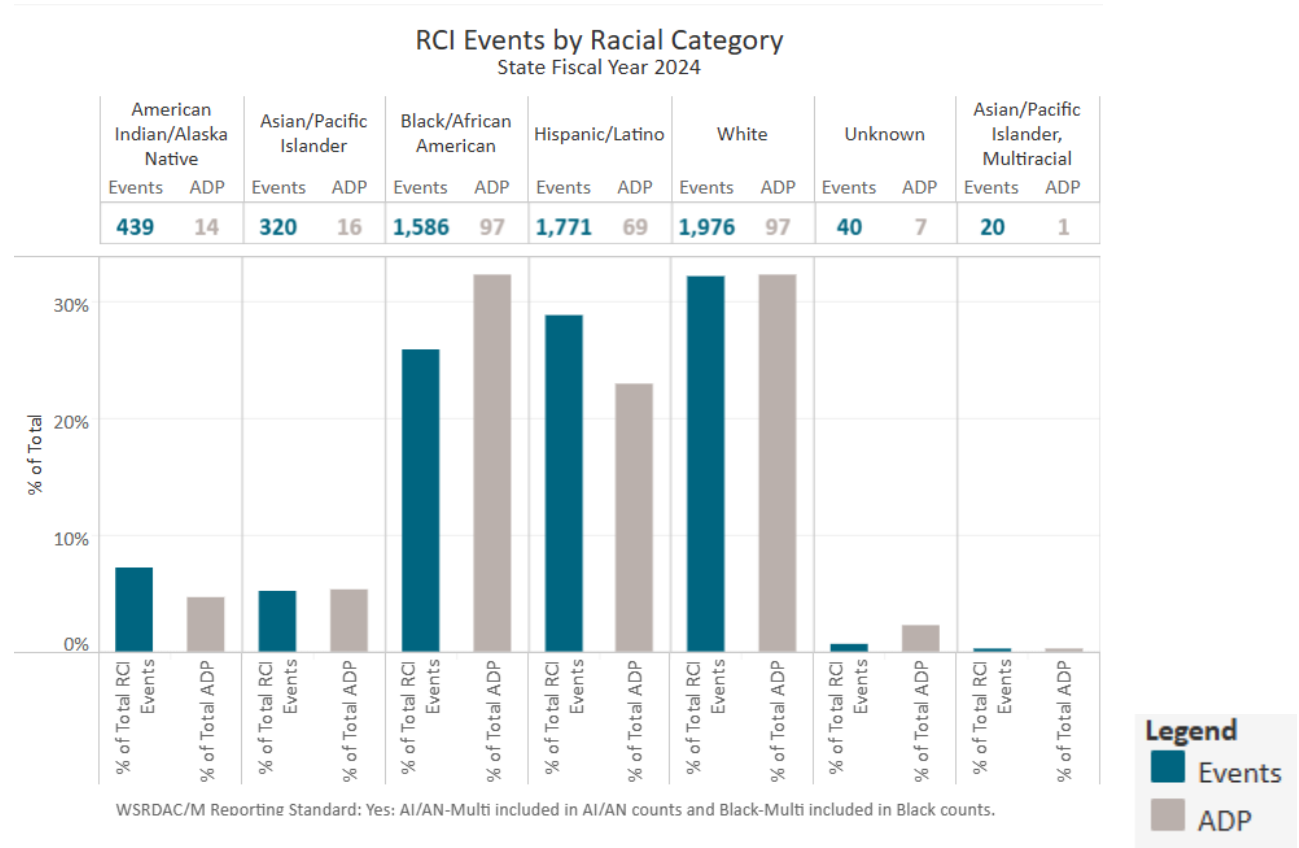## While the smallest portion of the JR population, Asian/PI youth have disparate access to Parole Services

- Access to parole is determined based on committing offense and risk profile.

- In 2024 comparable proportions of youth received parole services (43%-49%). The exception was Asian/Pacific Islander youth, of whom only 4 of 14 (29%) received parole.

What we Know about Racial Disproportionalities in Washington's Juvenile Rehabilitation System

Room Confinement and Isolation

- American Indian / Alaska Native youth account for 5% of the JR population, but nearly 10% of all RC/I events.

RCI Events by Racial Category
State Fiscal Year 2024

	American Indian/Alaska Native		Asian/Pacific Islander		Black/African American		Hispanic/Latino		White		Unknown		Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial	
	Events	ADP	Events	ADP	Events	ADP	Events	ADP	Events	ADP	Events	ADP	Events	ADP
	439	14	320	16	1,586	97	1,771	69	1,976	97	40	7	20	1

WSRDAC/M Reporting Standard: Yes: AI/AN-Multi included in AI/AN counts and Black-Multi included in Black counts.

Legend
- Events
- ADP

What DCYF is Doing to Address Racial Disproportionalities in Juvenile Rehabilitation

- Behavior Management System
  - The system emphasizes restorative and procedural justice principles and is designed to reduce bias and provide opportunities for youth voice.

- Multi-Disciplinary Team work
  - Individualized, objective, and impartial review of residents for eligibility for a less-restrictive placement

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Framework in Juvenile Rehabilitation
  - MTSS aims to ensure every student has equitable access to the instruction and supports they need to thrive, and includes Identifying and address biases and systemic barriers that drive inequitable access and disparate outcomes

- Increasing culturally relevant programming on campus
  - Across the continuum we are ensuring that there is a diverse array of programming for young people of all backgrounds available

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