

Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Ohio in 2009

This research brief examines Ohio's racial disproportionality and disparity¹ for children who (1) entered custody during 2008 and (2) for children in placement point-in-time on January 31, 2009.

Across all ages, 84.9% of Ohio's population in 2008 was Caucasian, and 12% was African-American. In 2009, there are 447,131 African-American children and 2,211,274 Caucasian children, which equates to one African-American child for every 4.9 Caucasian children.

Even with Caucasian children out-numbering African-American children in the population, a greater proportion, as shown in Figure 1, of African-American children entered custody during 2008. Similarly, African-American children were more likely to be in placement on January 31, 2009 than were Caucasian children.

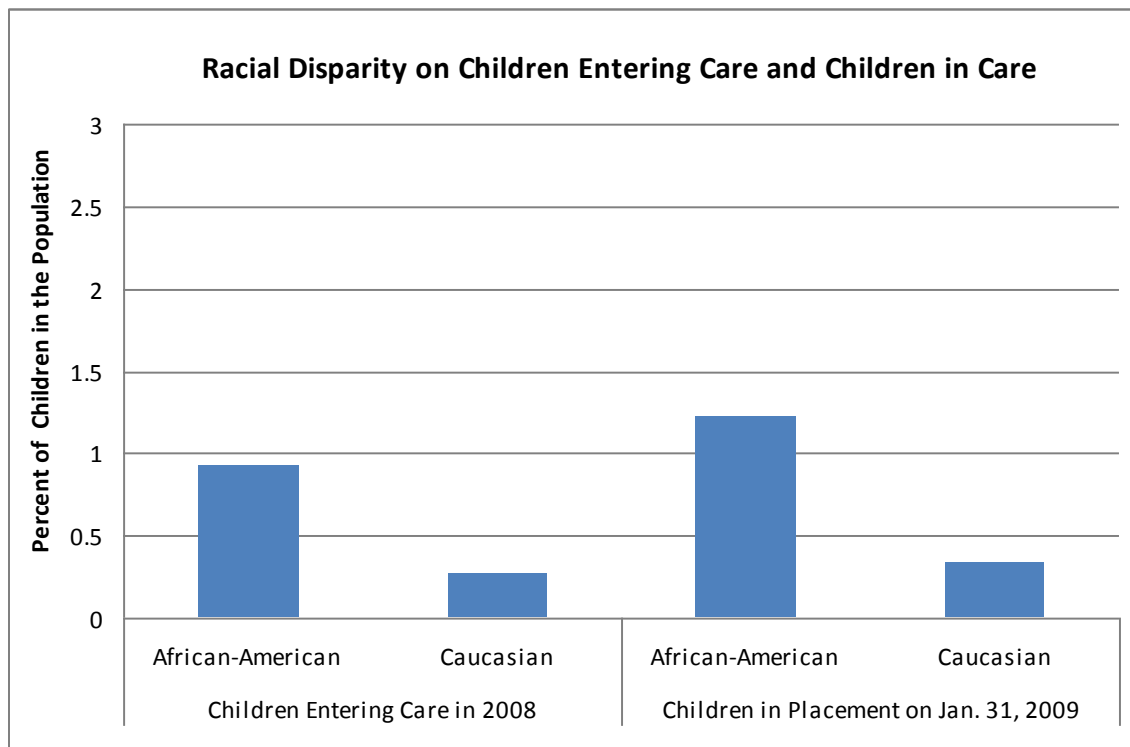


Fig. 1. Number of African-American and Caucasian children entering custody in 2008, and in placement on January 31, 2009 as a percent of the population by race.

In 2008, 4,051 African-American and 5,798 Caucasian children entered custody. As shown in Figure 1 (left side of the graph), slightly less than 1% of the African-American children

¹ Disproportionality compares a racial group to the general population. This allows us to say that 15% of the general population is in the XYZ racial group. Disparity compares one racial group with another racial group. A disparity analysis allows us to say that people in the XYZ ethnic group are 3 times more likely to have a specific outcome than people in the ABC racial group.

in the population entered custody, and less than one-third of 1 percent of Caucasian children in the population entered custody.

For children in placement on January 31, 2009, 1.2% of African-American children were in placement, compared to 0.3% of Caucasian children (right side of the graph). This racial difference becomes more pronounced when we consider the child's age.

Children Entering Custody

As noted in Figure 1, there are substantial differences in the proportion of African-American and Caucasian children entering custody and being in placement. However, when we exclude age in the analysis, important differences between African-Americans and Caucasians are masked. Therefore, subsequent analyses will incorporate child's age.

Figure 2 shows the number of children entering custody in 2008 by age at entry. Across all ages, there were more Caucasian children entering custody than African-American children entering custody in 2008. In fact, 43% more Caucasian children entered custody than African-American children. However, there are four times as many Caucasian children living in Ohio than African-American children.

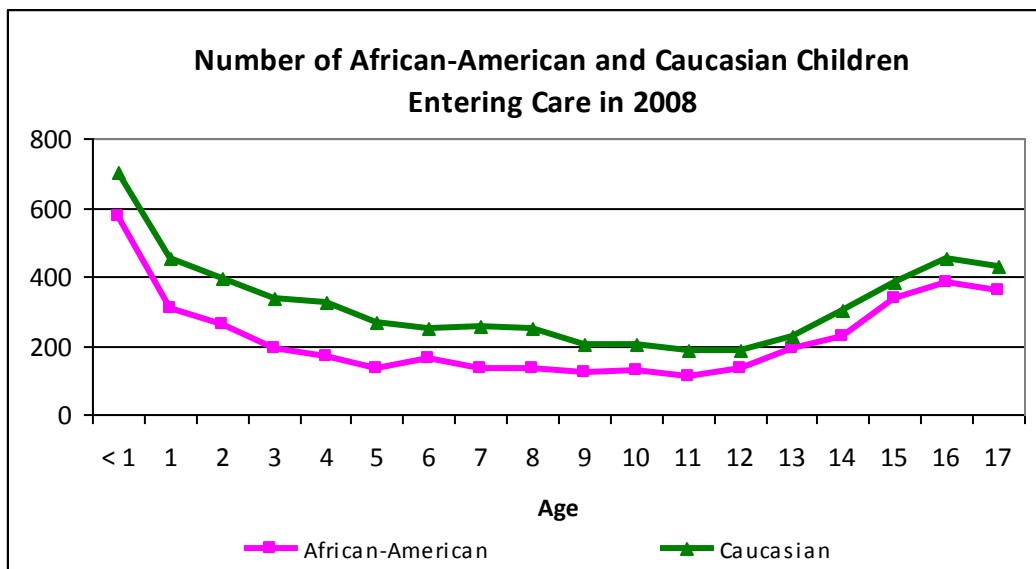


Fig. 2. Number of African-American and Caucasian Children entering custody in 2008.

When we adjust for population size, African-American children are more likely to enter custody (Figure 3). This is especially true for children who are less than two years old, and for children 13 and older. Specifically, 2.3% of the African-American children, who were less than 1-year-old, entered custody, compared to 0.6% of the Caucasian children. As Caucasian children age, fewer enter custody, except for children over 14. African-American children see a similar, although more dramatic decrease. However, as children become teens, a greater percentage of the population enters custody for both races, but the increase for African-American children is far more striking.

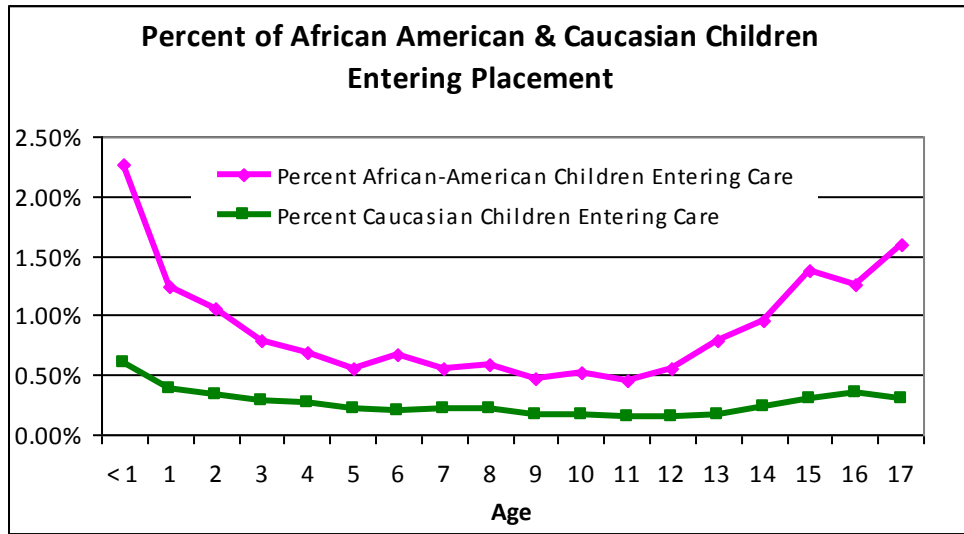


Fig. 3. Percent of African-American and Caucasian Children entering placement.

Figures 2 and 3 show that even though more Caucasian children enter custody than African-American children, African-American children are more likely to enter custody when we control for the size of the population. The question that comes to mind is this: How much more likely are African-American children to enter custody than Caucasian children? Figure 4 addresses this question and shows that African-American children who are less than one year old are nearly four times more like to enter care than Caucasian children. The likelihood decreases steadily, but spikes for six-year-olds, and then decreases for seven year olds. As children enter their early teens, the likelihood increases, with 13 and 15 year olds being about 4.5 times more likely to enter custody than Caucasian children.

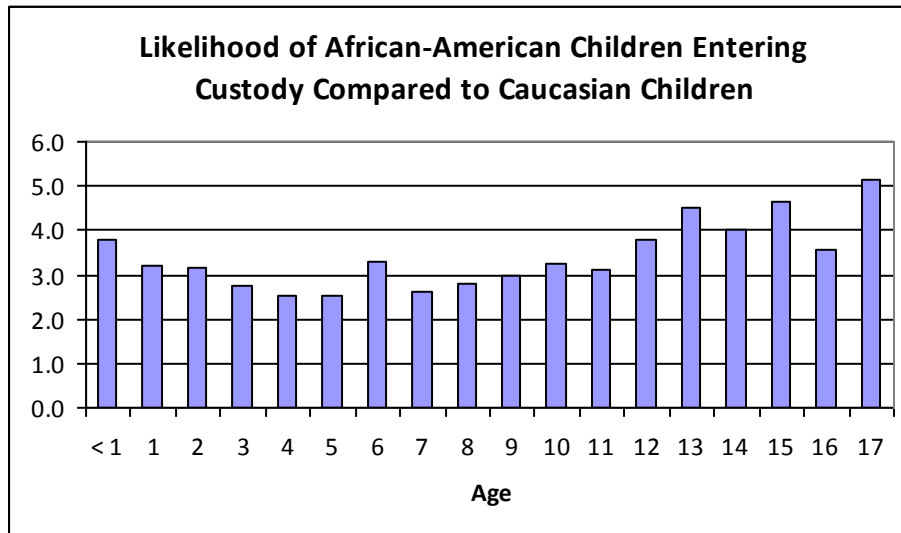


Fig. 4. Likelihood of African-American children entering custody compare to Caucasian children.

Children in Placement

There is strong evidence of racial disparity in children entering custody. Is there disparity with children in placement point-in-time?² When we examine the number of children in placement point-in-time, we see more Caucasian children in care (Table 1). This finding holds across all ages (Figure 5), although the difference narrows in the mid-teen years. For each age, in placement point in time, most children are Caucasian. In fact, for every African-American child, there are 1.42 Caucasian children. Furthermore, in the general population Caucasian children out number African-American children almost five to one.

Age	2009 Ohio Population		Children in Placement on January 31, 2009	
	African-American	Caucasian	African-American	Caucasian
< 1	25,730	117,844	316	424
1	25,041	117,240	378	536
2	24,802	117,571	287	471
3	24,467	117,911	227	349
4	24,946	119,702	182	325
5	24,552	119,646	150	278
6	24,087	119,925	158	278
7	24,132	120,260	143	296
8	23,052	116,078	168	278
9	25,043	124,569	138	247
10	24,819	125,782	142	243
11	24,231	124,960	169	265
12	24,453	125,252	180	279
13	24,274	127,744	216	282
14	24,257	128,247	319	335
15	24,193	128,154	424	488
16	24,463	130,216	534	598
17	30,589	130,173	578	715

Table 1. Number of children under 18 in the population and the number of children in placement by race and age.

² We define children in placement as those children whose legal custody has been granted to the county public children services agency by a court. It does not include children who are in the custody of a third party, for example, a relative. However, children in county custody and living with relatives are included in this analysis.

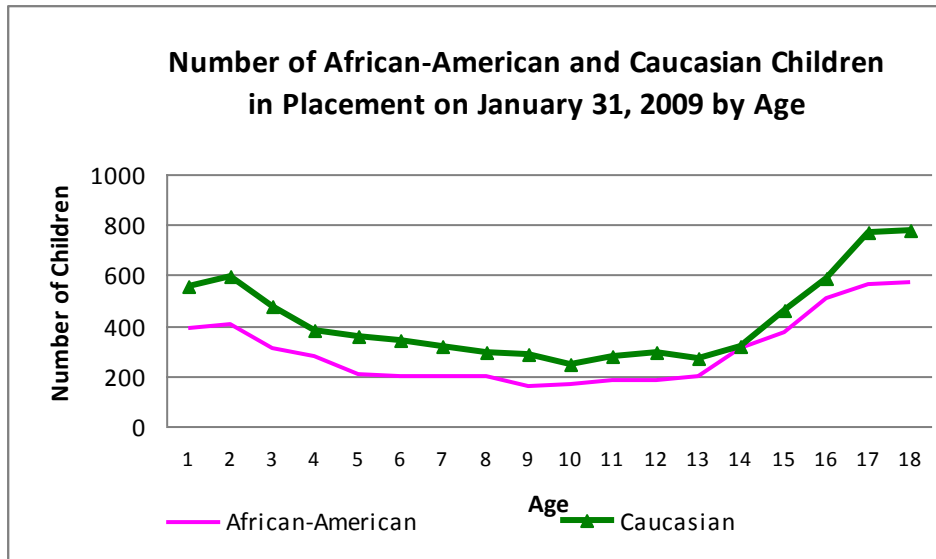


Fig. 5. Number of African-American and Caucasian children in placement on January 31, 2009 by age.

Yet, when we control for the number of children in the population, a greater percentage of African-American children are in placement across all ages (See Figure 6.). This pattern is similar to children entering custody (Figure 3). At the age of 1, 1.5% of the African-American children are in placement, compared to less than one-half of one-percent of Caucasian children. As in Figure 3, the percent of African-American children in placement decreases after the age of one, and then increases in the early teens.

More specifically, of all the African-American children in Ohio who were less than 1 year old, 1.2% were in placement on January 31, 2009. This compares to 0.4% of the Caucasian children in placement. In the pre-teen years, the percentage in placement for each race decreases. However, as African-American children enter adolescence, the proportion in placement increases to 2.2% at age 15, while the comparable rate for Caucasian children is 0.5%. These marked findings indicate that African-American children have greater risk of being in placement than Caucasian children across all age groups. The amount of risk is explored next.

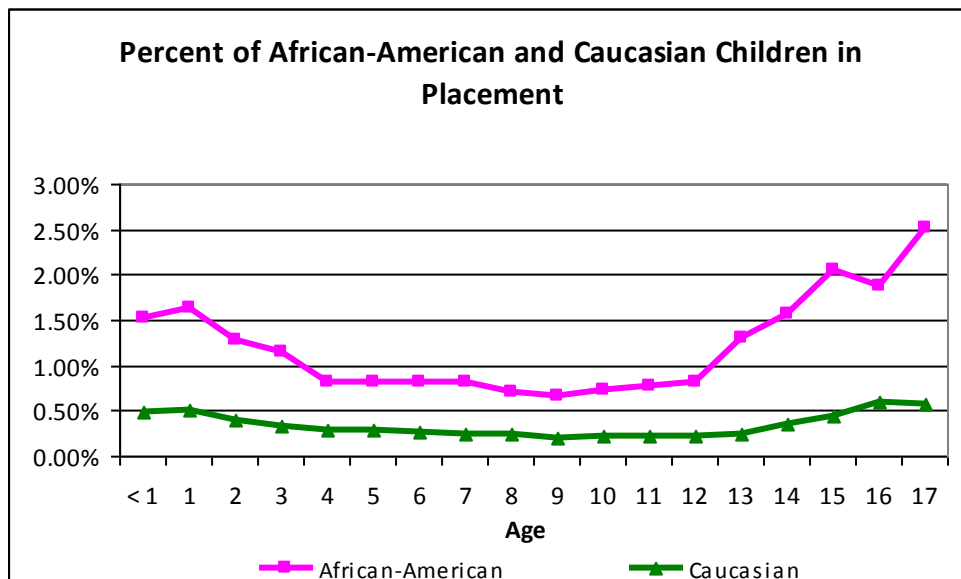


Fig. 6. Percent of African-American and Caucasian children in placement.

When we examine the differences between African-American and Caucasian children on the likelihood of being in placement, we consistently find that African-American children are more likely to be in placement (Figure 7.). African-Americans, under one year are 3.2 times more likely to be in placement than Caucasian children. Although this rate stays fairly constant for several years, the rate increases in the teen years with African-American children being five times more likely at the age of 13 and over four times more likely at 15. At a minimum, African-American children are 2.5 times are likely to be in placement.

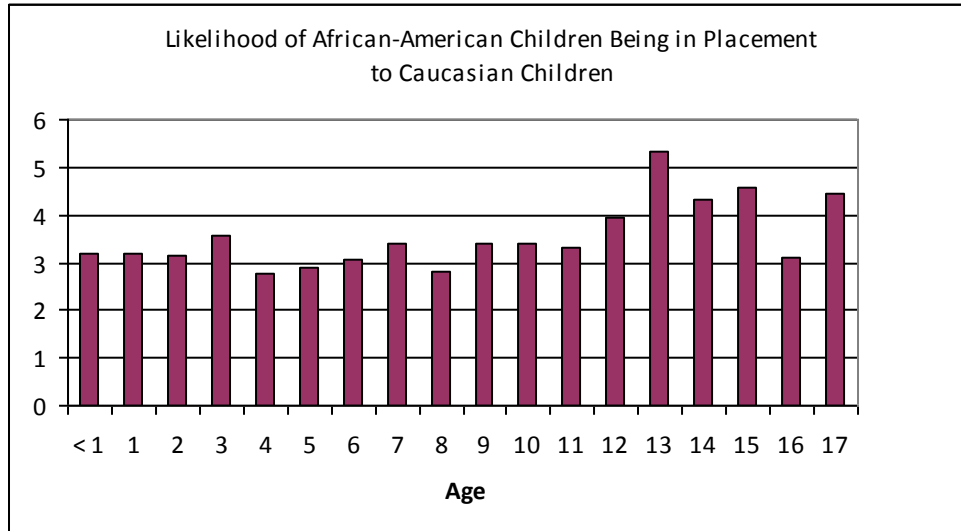


Fig. 7. Likelihood of African-American children being in placement to Caucasian children.

Summary

We observe disproportionality and disparity from multiple events. In this analysis, we chose two: Number of children entering custody, and the number of children in care point-in-time. We are planning to extend the analysis to include children investigated for abuse and neglect, and children in need of adoption. We think it is valuable to examine these differences by single age years, rather than the more standard age groups. Although we find disparity when we collapse data across age groups, the results are substantially muted, and may actually distort the actual results. We are committed to furthering this analysis by using single age years.

In addition, we would like to extend this analysis across multiple years to see if various policies or practices implemented over the years have contributed to the disparity. We would also like to generalize this analysis to the specific county level.

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