

WATCHING THE NUMBERS

Covid-19's Continued Effects on The Child Welfare System

Annual Data Report

March 2023



Center for
New York City
Affairs

Child welfare activity, which declined with the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Our annual *Watching the Numbers* report tracks trends in key child welfare indicators and our latest report includes six years of data ending with City Fiscal Year 2022. Notably, this year's report includes monthly data from the onset of the pandemic in early 2020 through August 2022.

Lower levels of activity remain for: abuse and neglect reports; investigations; court filings and orders; mandated services; foster care admissions; and discharge outcomes. These and other indicators have stayed below recent historical trends. Less child welfare activity has not made children less safe at home and advocates point to important lessons learned during the pandemic – when a more generous social safety net helped to meet the needs of families and diminished abuse and neglect reports and child welfare surveillance.

Some key trends in this year's report:

- Continuing a long-term trend, children entering foster care and the total foster care population declined. The number of children admitted to care stayed below 3,000 in calendar year (CY) 2021.
- After dropping to a pandemic low of 240 adoptions completed in CY2020, the number of adoptions increased to 438 in 2021, still significantly lower than in previous years. The percent completed in less than two years was 10% in 2021.
- The number of children discharged to reunification within a year increased in 2021.
- Average caseloads for child protective workers increased to 8.4 in FY22, and 105 workers had caseloads over 15.
- The number of families receiving preventive services remained low, at 15,395 in FY22, with lower numbers of new families in evidence-based services and new entries in preventive care overall.
- The racial disparities among children in foster care remained high in 2022, with Black and Latinx children representing over 85 percent of children in foster care.
- Monthly data for selected indicators remained lower than in pre-pandemic 2019. After a sharp drop in the spring of 2020, monthly data for investigations, emergency removals, abuse and neglect cases filed in Family Court, court-ordered supervision, preventive services, and admissions to and discharges from foster care all increased. Nevertheless, they still remained below pre-pandemic levels.



WATCHING THE NUMBERS

Covid-19's Effects on Child Welfare System Assessed in CNYCA's Annual Report
March 2023

	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	TREND
PROTECTIVE SERVICES							
REPORTS							
Reports of abuse and neglect dropped at the onset of Covid-19 and have continued to decline. The rate at which reports were substantiated dropped to less than a third of all reports.							
Reports of Abuse and Neglect	67,752	68,766	66,212	55,984	53,311	50,616	
Percentage of Reports Substantiated	40.4	38.0	37.7	36.4	35.2	31.8	
CASELOADS							
Caseloads increased in FY22, including 105 caseworkers with more than 15 assigned cases.							
Average Child Protective Caseload	12.4	12.5	10.5	7.5	6.3	8.4	
Caseworkers with Caseloads over 15 (June)	341	NA	96	0	8	105	
PETITIONS AND OUTCOMES							
The number of families taken to Family Court by ACS and under Court ordered supervision increased slightly in FY22. Emergency removals also increased.							
Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed by ACS - Family Court	14,207	14,913	12,723	10,305	7,791	8,009	
ACS Supervision Ordered by Family Court	9,462	10,033	8,299	6,786	4,725	4,827	
Total Emergency Removals	1,835	1,918	1,820	1,348	1,302	1,505	
Emergency Removals Approved at Initial Hearing	1,287	1,360	1,284	956	770	945	
FATALITIES - CALENDAR YEAR (2016 - 2021)							
The number of child fatalities in families known to ACS within the last decade was 53 in calendar year 2021.							
Child Fatalities in Cases Known to ACS	56	63	59	57	52	53	
PREVENTIVE SERVICES							
FAMILIES SERVED IN PREVENTIVE SERVICES							
The number of families receiving preventive services remained low in FY22, which ACS attributes to reduced demand for in-home services during the pandemic.							
Families Receiving ACS-Contracted Preventive Services	20,207	20,315	21,101	19,209	15,469	15,395	
New Preventive Cases in Evidence-Based Services	2,851	2,901	2,989	2,334	2,879	1,988	
New Preventive Cases Overall	9,240	9,608	9,965	7,699	8,317	6,817	

PREVENTIVE SERVICES ENTRIES AND EXITS

The percentage of preventive cases that were referred by ACS increased in FY22. The percentage of those admitted to foster care during or shortly after preventive services increased in CY21.

% of Preventive Cases Referred by ACS	77.8	78.4	77.8	74.0	80.5	83.6	
% of Children Admitted to Foster Care who received Preventive Services in the Previous Year (CY2016-2021)	3.3	3.1	2.1	1.9	1.1	1.6	

FOSTER CARE SERVICES

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The total foster care population declined significantly in FY22, continuing a long downward trend.

Total Average Foster Care Population	8,921	8,732	8,341	7,827	7,639	7,140	
Children Admitted to Foster Care (CY 2016-2021)	3,680	4,285	3,743	3,497	2,643	2,695	

FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS

Kinship care placements continued to trend upward in FY22. Forty-two percent of siblings were separated in CY21.

% of Separated Siblings (CY 2016-2021)	41.3	40.0	42.0	44.4	41.9	42.0	
% of Foster Children in Kinship Care	30.9	33.0	38.1	39.8	42.2	43.0	
% of Foster Placements in Contiguous Community Districts	36.6	36.2	28.7	28.9	25.9	27.4	

FOSTER CARE DISCHARGES CALENDAR YEAR (2016 - 2021)

The number of children discharged from foster care hovered at 3,052 in 2021. The number of children discharged to reunification within a year increased from the prior year's low point.

Children Discharged from Foster Care	4,388	4,487	4,100	3,102	3,042	3,052	
Number of Children Discharged to KinGAP	384	306	379	267	414	392	
Number of Children Discharged to APPLA	712	673	613	570	568	551	
Percentage of Children with Reunification Goal	52.6	54.5	51.0	50.0	48.3	49.0	
Children Discharged to Reunification within a Year	1,440	1,322	1,356	1,111	790	842	
Percentage of Children Discharged to Permanency within a Year of Placement	31.8	29.9	32.5	29.6	26.5	29.2	

DISCHARGE OUTCOMES - CALENDAR YEAR (2016 - 2021)

In CY21, the percentage of children returning to foster care within two years of discharge increased slightly.

Percentage of Children Returning to Care within Two Years of Discharge	11.6	9.9	11.4	11.9	11.3	11.5	
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ADOPTION SERVICES

ADOPTION SERVICES - CALENDAR YEAR (2016 - 2021)

The number of adoptions in CY21 increased significantly from the prior year but remain lower than pre-pandemic levels. Only 10 percent of adoptions were completed within two years.

Percentage of Children with Adoption as a Goal	28.0	26.8	26.4	23.8	25.6	25.2	
Adoptions	959	888	810	706	240	438	
Percentage of Adoptions Completed in less than Two Years	30.0	32.2	29.0	34.7	31.4	10.0	

FOSTER CARE POPULATION

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The profound racial disparities among children in foster care remained in 2022, with Black and Latinx children making up over 85% of all children in foster care. The percentage of children in foster care for more than three years decreased for children ages 2-5.

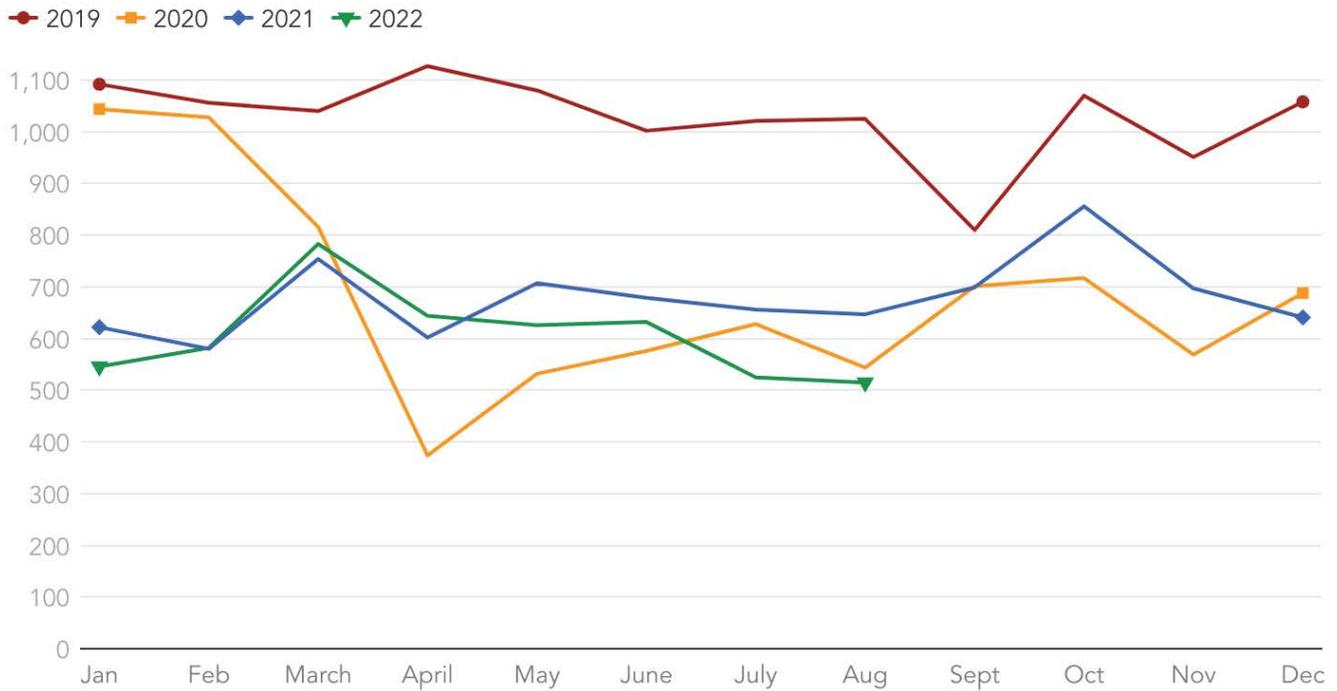
Children Admitted to Foster Care	4,025	4,068	3,717	3,006	2,551	2,695	
< 2 years old	26.6	28.7	28.1	30.0	31.4	26.0	
2-5 years old	21.3	21.1	22.2	21.3	21.6	20.5	
6-9 years old	17.1	16.5	17.5	15.7	16.0	17.3	
10-13 years old	13.8	14.7	14.7	14.9	14.2	16.3	
14-17 years old	19.9	18.2	16.4	17.3	15.9	19.0	
18+ years old	1.3	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	
Children in Foster Care (as of March 2022)	8,871	8,512	8,358	7,860	7,324	7,601	
White	5.5	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.2	5.2	
African American	55.1	54.7	53.9	52.9	51.6	50.6	
Latinx	33.8	35.2	35.9	36.7	37.3	35.5	
Asian	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	
Other/Unknown	1.0	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.9	6.6	
% Children in Foster Care >3 Years (as of March 2022)	36.8	33.0	29.5	33.9	36.7	35.5	
2-5 years old	40.1	35.6	31.0	36.9	44.3	32.9	
6-9 years old	44.8	39.4	34.0	41.2	43.1	41.5	
10-13 years old	41.1	37.1	31.3	37.0	40.5	37.8	
14-17 years old	37.6	34.4	32.7	37.7	39.0	33.7	
18+ years old	64.9	65.3	64.1	63.6	63.4	64.6	

Note: All numbers above reported in NYC fiscal years, unless otherwise noted, where subheadings or rows are highlighted in yellow.

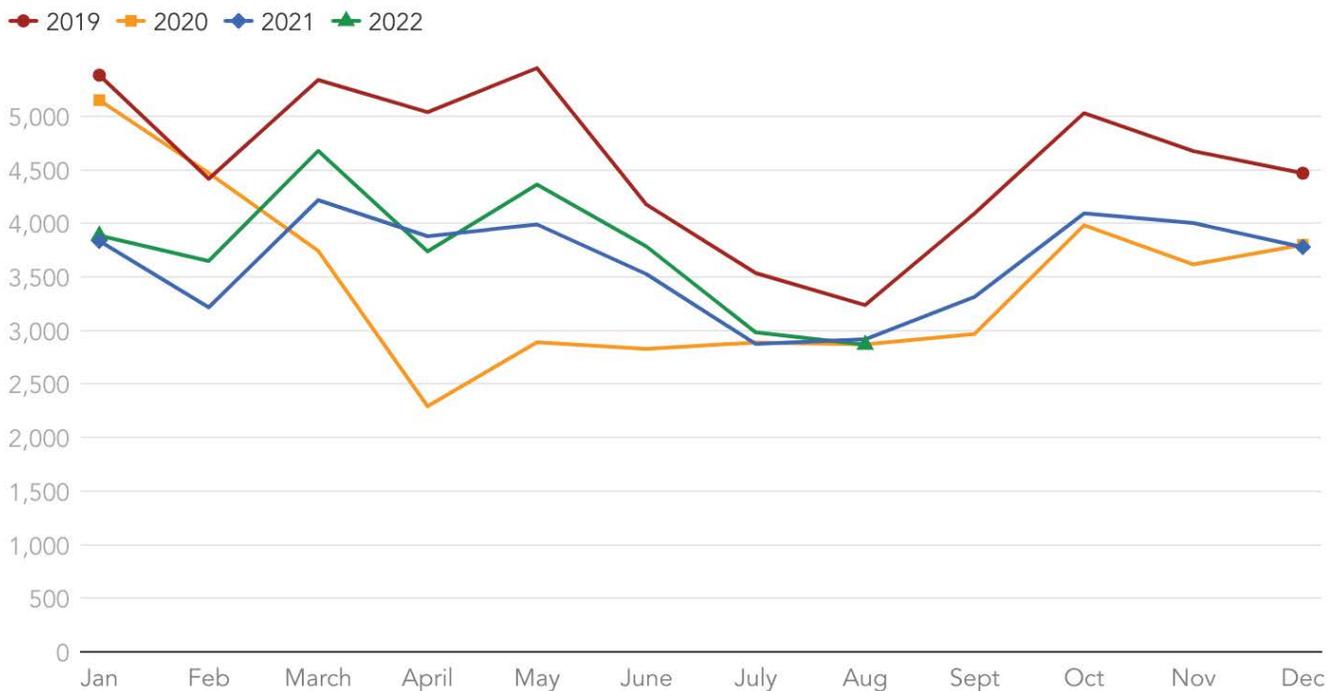
Source: NYC Mayor's Management Reports, NY State Office of Children and Family Services Monitoring and Analysis Profiles, NYC Administration for Children's Services Flash Reports, NYC ACS annual reports, and ACS data request.

MONTHLY TRENDS THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC FOR SELECTED METRICS

Abuse and Neglect Cases Filed by ACS in Family Court



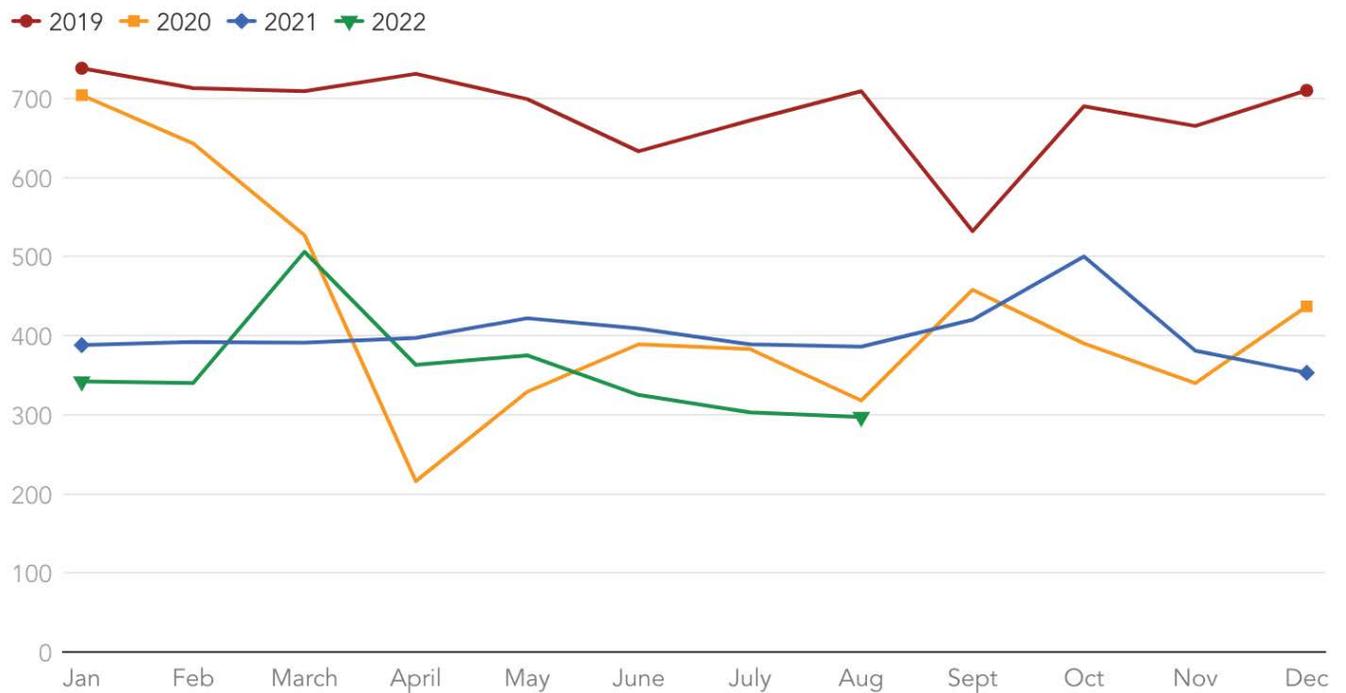
Consolidated abuse and neglect investigations



Total Emergency Removals

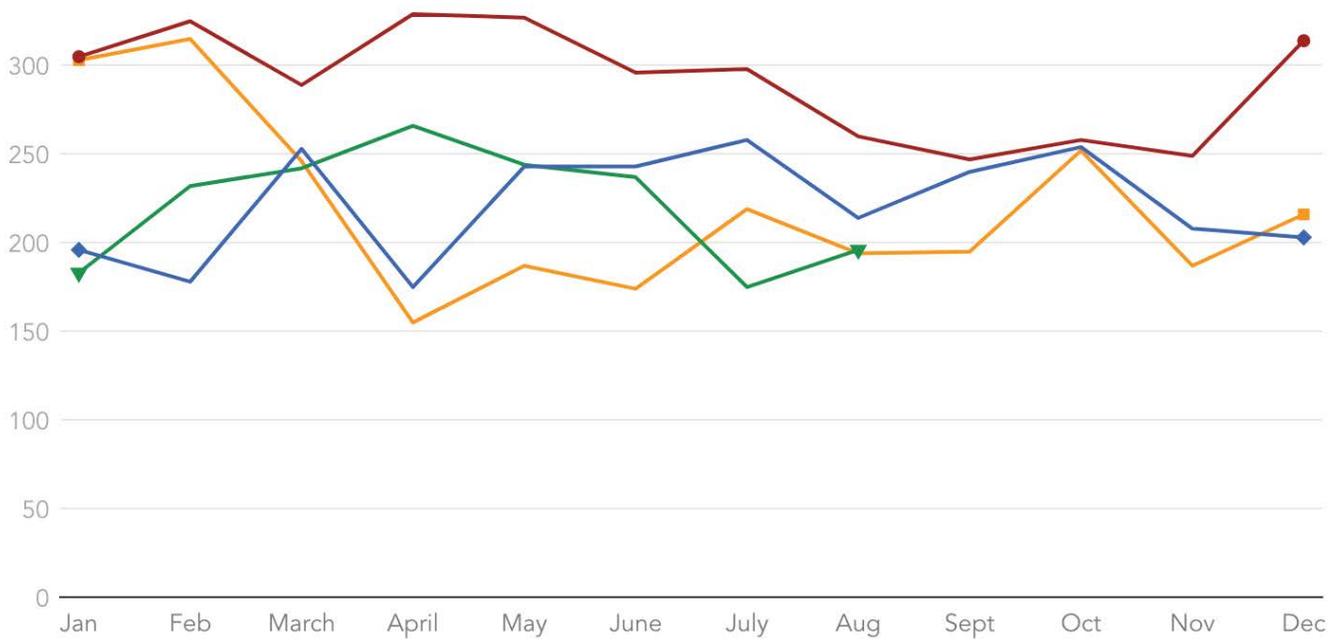


ACS Supervision Ordered by Family Court



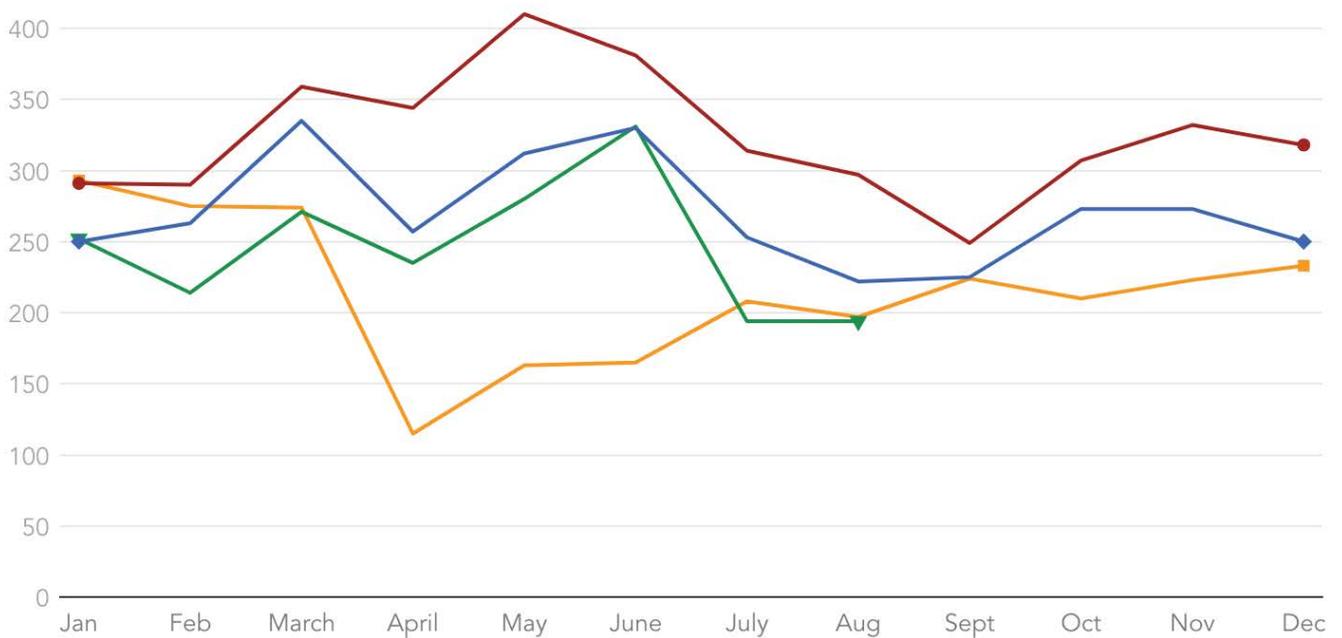
Children Admitted to Foster Care

2019 2020 2021 2022



Children Discharged from Foster Care

2019 2020 2021 2022



New Preventive Cases Overall

2019 2020 2021 2022

