Survey Participants

Race
Ethnicity
National Origin
Tribal Affiliation
Language Spoken
Sexual Orientation
Gender Identity
Gender Expression
Sex Assigned at Birth
Disability

Race

100%

Ethnicity

75%

National Origin

50%

Tribal Affiliation

25%

Language Spoken

0%

Sexual Orientation

47.6%

Gender Identity

52.4%

Gender Expression

54.8%

Sex Assigned at Birth

61.9%

Disability

16.67%

What elements of personal identity or demographic characteristics do child welfare agencies or contracted agencies collect data on?

The vast majority of child welfare jurisdictions collect data on race and ethnicity. However, often this data is not accurate or specific to subgroups or cultures beyond the Office of Budget Management (OMB) categories.

Some jurisdictions also collect data on national origin (40%), disability (52%), language spoken (64%), and gender identity (38%). Some indicated they are working to improve their collection of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) data.

Percentage of Respondents

88%

This contradicts findings from the focus groups, wherein many said that they were not asked about race or ethnicity, indicating discrepancies between policy and practice.

Methods such as reporter observation or caseworker observation are also frequently used, with 79% and 74% using these methods, respectively.

of survey respondents reported that race and ethnicity data is collected using either youth self-report or caregiver self-report.

Focus Group Participants

17 youth & young adults, 18 parents, 10 caseworkers, and 9 data administrators

92.86%

95.24%

40.48%

57.14%

64.29%

16.67%

38.1%

9.52%

7.14%

52.38%

2.38%


Challenges in Accurate Collection of Race or Ethnicity

Lack of Clear Guidance Regarding What Data to Collect, How, and When
47.6%

Inconsistent Application of Guidance Regarding Data Collection
52.4%

Lack of Training for Staff About Why It’s Important to Collect This Data
54.8%

Staff Don’t Feel Comfortable Asking About Racial/Ethnic Identity
61.9%

Lack of Time/Low Priority on Caseworker’s Demanding Workload
45.2%

N/A—Race or Ethnicity Data Not Collected
7.1%

Other
7.1%


81% said data is used to be shared with staff and partners

40% said data is used to inform decision-making regarding resource allocation

50% said the data was used to inform policy decisions

74% said the data was used to inform practice, training, and programs

36% said data is used to inform workforce decisions

5% said that the data is not used

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Lack of Clear Guidance Regarding What Data to Collect, How, and When
This is who we are, right? It’s like it’s like asking somebody, ‘Do you mind if I spell your name wrong?’ You know? It’s something basic. You should know as much as you can about families, right, about our family, about our children, about ourselves. And if we’re not there to give that information, then to the best of your ability [you should] be able to find that out.

— Birth Parent

I think being able to practice things in line with not only your racial identity, but like your ethnic and cultural identity can be just incredibly impactful. Going from where you’re hearing like familiar music or TV shows or ways of celebrating things or types of food to eat to absolutely nothing on top of being in the foster care system is just incredibly isolating.

— Young Person with Lived Experience in Foster Care

### Themes and Findings

- Shared importance of asking about race/ethnicity as a starting point for getting to know children, youth and families and connecting them to services and supports that meet their needs
- Expressed concern about these data being used to stereotype or pigeonhole young people and their family members
- Expressed frustration about not being asked, and assumptions made, about their identity by caseworkers and resource parents
- Emphasized value of caseworkers practicing cultural humility and reflecting on their biases
- Identified concern that asking about race is a potentially sensitive subject if young people or their family members don’t know their background or ancestry

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**Parent and Caregiver Focus Group Demographics (N=18)**

- **Race**
  - White............................................................7
  - Black or African American......................5
  - Hispanic, Latino, Puerto Rican...............2
  - Black & Native American.........................2
  - Native Hawaiian..........................................1
  - Greek & White.............................................1

- **Ethnicity**
  - Greek, Native American, & White...........4
  - African American..................3
  - White and Middle Eastern.........1
  - Native American & Black........1
  - Ethiopian.................................................1
  - White/Red/Irish/Italian on one side, German/Dutch on the other side.........1
  - Salvadoran American.....................1
  - Native American & South African...........1
  - Hispanic/Mexican............2

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**Parent Role**

- 11 Birth Parents
- 5 Foster Parents
- 1 Adoptive Parent
- 1 Kin Caregiver

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**MY PRONOUNS ARE**

- She/Her 53%
- She/They 6%
- They/Them 6%
- He/Him 29%
- All 6%
**Data Administrators**
*Focus Group Demographics (N=9)*

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>White, Diné, Dos Pueblos, Hispanic</td>
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"We want to make this question as regular and as normal as possible. We don’t want our workers to be afraid of asking about race or ethnicity."  
— Data Administrator

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**Caseworker**
*Focus Group Demographics (N=10)*

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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Puerto Rican</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian American</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Being here is definitely out of my comfort zone. Forcing me to talk about things that I’m not used to or comfortable with—I don’t like being combative. And I don’t like to come off like I don’t know anything, but you don’t learn anything if you don’t ask questions. So that’s something I’m learning to do."  
— Caseworker

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### Themes and Findings

- Expressed concern about unintended consequences of these data that could lead to bias or stereotypes.
- Shared that pushing through discomfort to ask about race has led to learning and benefits for caseworkers.
- Emphasized need for training and resources on this topic.

*Focus group facilitators did not collapse any categories on race or ethnicity. We reported the information using the same descriptors as the focus group participants.*