

Foster Care & Kinship Care Statistics

A source sheet for The Little Pebble Books | U.S. and Colorado data
Prepared September 2026

Important: Kinship care is broader than kinship foster care. Kinship care can include children being raised by grandparents, relatives, or close family friends outside the formal foster-care system. Statistics below keep those populations distinct.

Statistic	What it means	Source
2.4 million	About 2.4 million U.S. children were being raised in kinship families in 2023 - by relatives or close family friends when parents were not providing the primary care.	U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), <i>Relatives Raising Children: Federal Support Helps, but Challenges Persist</i> , GAO-26-107658 (2026), using Census/HHS data.
18 to 1	For every child in a kinship family who was in foster care, about 18 children were being raised by kin outside the foster-care system in 2023.	U.S. GAO, GAO-26-107658 (2026), analysis of Census and HHS data.
39%	About 39% of children in U.S. foster care were placed with relatives/kin in 2024 - approximately 127,449 children.	Generations United / Grandfamilies.org, national kinship foster-care data using 2024 foster-care data.
2,016,003 grandparents	Estimated number of grandparents responsible for grandchildren under age 18 living with them in the United States in the 2024 American Community Survey.	U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, Table B10050.
1,002,768 grandparents	Estimated grandparents who had been responsible for their grandchildren for five years or longer.	U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, Table B10050.
8% of children	Census research using 2017-2021 ACS data found that 8% of U.S. children under 18 lived in their grandparents' home. This does NOT mean all were being raised by grandparents; a parent may also have lived in the home.	U.S. Census Bureau, <i>Grandparents and Their Coresident Grandchildren</i> (2024 release).
~39,000 Colorado children	Approximately 39,000 Colorado children - about 3% of children in the state - were estimated to live in kinship/grandfamily arrangements.	Generations United / Grandfamilies.org, <i>2025 State of Grandfamilies Report</i> , Colorado state profile.
37% in Colorado	Approximately 37% of Colorado children in foster care were in kinship care in 2024, representing about 1,430 children.	Generations United / Grandfamilies.org, <i>2025 State of Grandfamilies Report</i> , Colorado state profile.
33%	Among children who left foster care for adoption in 2022, 33% were adopted by a relative.	Generations United / Grandfamilies.org, Adoption resource page, citing federal foster-care/adoption data.

Primary Sources & Where to Verify the Numbers

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)

GAO-26-107658, *Relatives Raising Children: Federal Support Helps, but Challenges Persist*. Official page: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107658>

U.S. Census Bureau

2024 American Community Survey, Table B10050 - Grandparents Living With Own Grandchildren Under 18 Years by Responsibility for Own Grandchildren. Data portal: <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2024.B10050>

U.S. Census Bureau

Grandparents and Their Coresident Grandchildren. Official release:

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/grandparents-coresident-grandchildren.html>

Generations United / Grandfamilies.org

Kinship Foster Care & Licensing data: <https://www.grandfamilies.org/Topic-Library/Kinship-Foster-Care-Licensing>

Generations United / Grandfamilies.org

2025 State of Grandfamilies Report (includes Colorado):

<https://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/State-of-grandfamilies-2025.pdf>

Generations United / Grandfamilies.org

Adoption resource: <https://www.grandfamilies.org/Resources/Adoption>

Recommended Website Statistics

2.4 million: About 2.4 million children in the U.S. were being raised in kinship families in 2023.

39%: About 39% of children in U.S. foster care were placed with relatives/kin in 2024.

18 to 1: For every child in a kinship family who was in foster care, about 18 were being raised by kin outside foster care in 2023.

Use note: Always include the year and define the population. Avoid changing "lived in a grandparent's home" into "was raised by a grandparent," because those are not equivalent measures.