A Comparison of Urban Jurisdictions:
Child Welfare and Demographic Indicators

District of Columbia

March 2011

The analyses that follow combine demographic data and child welfare data to view the similarities and differences across major US cities[1] and/or large urban counties.[2] Selected cities were chosen for comparison to the District of Columbia because of similar demographics. In particular, we chose small to mid-sized cities with high rates of family poverty and larger African American populations, with an emphasis on the Northeast region of the United States.
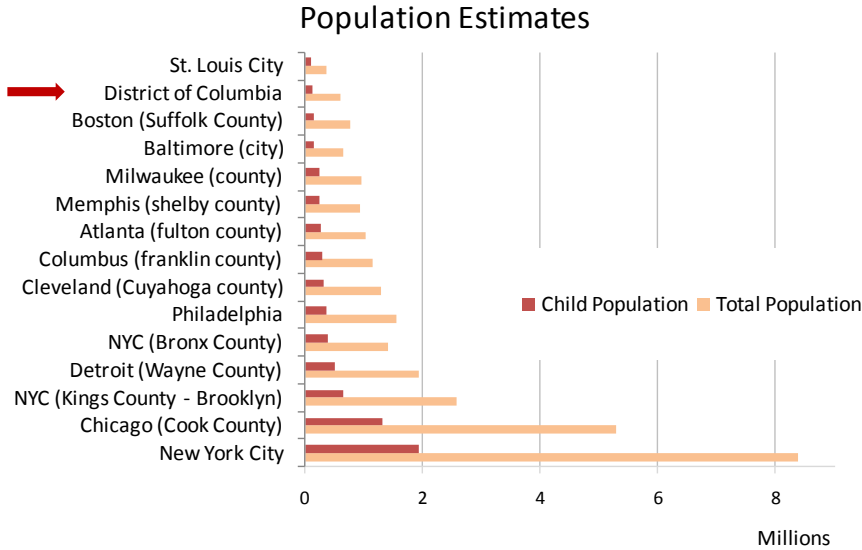
Comparative Demographics – Population

City/County	State	City Population	County Population	% total pop African American (alone or in combination with any other race)	% total pop Hispanic/ Latino(a) (any race)	2009 est Child Population	% below poverty level (of families with children)	% headed by Single female (of families with children)	% of Civilian labor force Unemployed; Estimate
Atlanta (fulton county)	GA	540,932	1,033,756	44.0%	8.7%	255,845	18.3	32%	11.9%
Baltimore (city)	MD	637,418	637,418	63.5%	3.0%	153,674	25.6%	56%	12.8%
Boston (Suffolk County)	MA	645,187	753,580	24.3%	18.4%	141,442	18.8%	38%	10.9%
Chicago (Cook County)	IL	2,850,502	5,287,037	25.9%	23.2%	1,310,650	18.9%	28%	12.2%
Cleveland (Cuyahoga county)	OH	431,369	1,275,709	30.1%	4.5%	297,863	21.9%	39%	13.6%
Columbus (franklin county)	OH	773,021	1,150,122	20.8%	4.5%	287,503	20.6%	30%	8.9%
Detroit (Wayne County)	MI	910,848	1,925,848	41.3%	5.2%	508,550	28.1%	37%	20.1%
District of Columbia	DC	599,657	n/a	54.3%	8.8%	114,886	25.6%	49%	11.1%
Memphis (shelby county)	TN	676,646	920,232	52.0%	5.1%	247,204	24.7%	39%	12.0%
Milwaukee (county)	WI	605,027	959,521	26.6%	12.2%	246,810	25.9%	38%	10.9%
New York City	NY	8,391,881	n/a	26.5%	27.6%	1,935,156	22.3%	33%	10.2%
NYC (Bronx County)	NY	n/a	1,397,287	37.5%	52.0%	387,336	34.1%	54%	13%
NYC (Kings County - Brooklyn)	NY	n/a	2,567,098	34.9%	19.6%	648,534	25.5%	33%	10%
Philadelphia	PA	1,547,297	1,547,297	43.8%	11.7%	357,454	27.4%	44%	13.8%
St. Louis City	MO	356,587	n/a	48.8%	3.1%	86,842	37.1%	55%	14.4%

[1] *Demographic variables were obtained from American Factfinder and are based on the American Community Survey. (ACS FY09 one year estimates.) Child welfare variables were obtained from the 2009 AFCARS file.*
[2] *For many major metropolitan areas, demographic data are available for both the city, and the surrounding county. Some cities either make up the entire county, or are considered "independent" and have data in AFCARS that match the city boundaries. In most of the other cities, however, there are substantial differences in population and demographic characteristics between the city proper and the county. Because AFCARS child welfare data are available at the county level, we have used the corresponding county area for demographic comparison in those cases.*
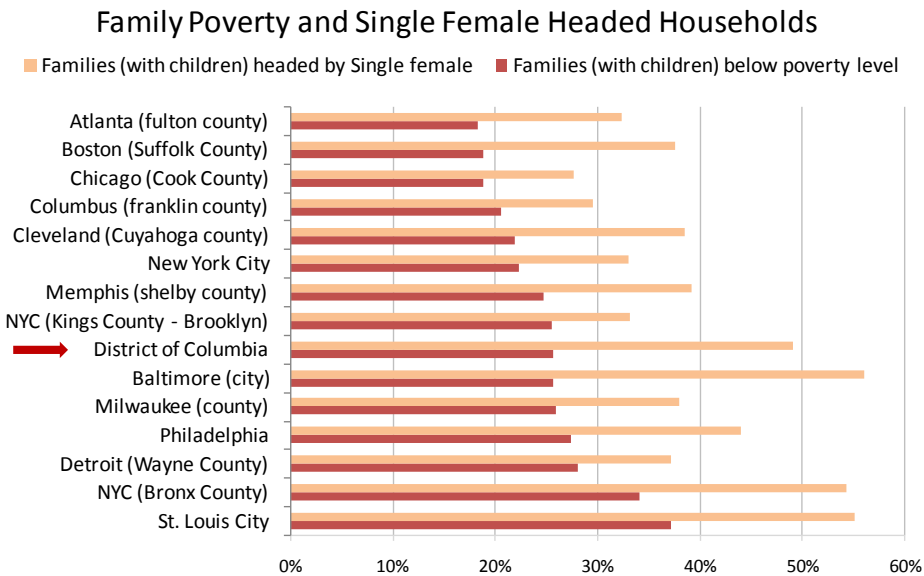
Population

DC is among the smallest jurisdictions in this analysis. This is partly due to the inclusion of surrounding suburban areas in some of the urban counties, such as Atlanta, Cleveland, and Columbus, where child welfare data were not available at the city level.

Population Estimates

Percent of Families below Poverty

Among cities in this analysis, the city of St. Louis has the highest percentage of families (with children) living below the poverty level (37% vs. 26% in DC). Among these cities, DC has the fourth highest percentage of families with children headed by a single female (49% of all families with children).

Family Poverty and Single Female Headed Households

Child Welfare Indicators

The information presented here is descriptive only, and care should be taken when comparing child welfare jurisdictions as there is tremendous variation in statute, policy and practice across these agencies.

Among these jurisdictions, the District of Columbia has a relatively high entry rate and the second highest in-care rate[3]. Among other child welfare indicators, the District's measures are about average. These are explored further in the pages that follow.

City/County	# FY09 entries	FY09 re-entries (as % of total entries)	entry rate per 1,000 FY09	# children in care 9/30/09	in care rate per 1,000 on 9/30/09	FY09 in care rate: African American	FY09 in care rate: White	FY09 in care rate: Latino
Atlanta (fulton county)	606	12.0%	2.4	970	3.8	7.1	0.4	1.5
Baltimore (city)	1305	24.9%	8.5	4,057	26.4	31.8	11.9	8.8
Boston (Suffolk County)	709	26.4%	5.0	1,119	7.9	13.9	4.7	7.2
Chicago (Cook County)	1532	14.1%	1.2	7369	5.6	15.0	1.7	1.5
Cleveland (Cuyahoga county)	772	24.5%	2.6	1689	5.7	11.3	2.2	3.5
Columbus (franklin county)	1735	35.5%	6.0	2034	7.1	14.1	4.4	5.4
Detroit (Wayne County)	2454	8.8%	4.8	6,252	12.3	21.1	4.2	6.8
District of Columbia	624	20.2%	5.4	2111	18.4	24.3	0.7	9.9
Memphis (shelby county)	1033	15.7%	4.2	932	3.8	5.6	0.8	2.2
Milwaukee (county)	1206	23.6%	4.9	2466	10.0	19.9	3.6	4.9
New York City	7460	22.6%	3.9	16,701	8.6	17.0	1.4	6.5
NYC (Bronx County)	2442		6.3	4886	12.6	22.8	7.4	6.4
NYC (Kings County - Brooklyn)	1983		3.1	3967	6.1	9.7	0.8	7.1
Philadelphia	3447	47.4%	9.6	5,683	15.9	22.9	4.7	8.0
St. Louis City	282	30.9%	3.2	1,053	12.1	17.3	4.3	5.0

City/County	% in relative care on 9/30/09	% in congregate care on 9/30/09	% reunified (of all FY09 exits)	% adopted (of all FY09 exits)	% exited to guardianship (of all FY09 exits)	% exits to permanency (of all FY09 exits)
Atlanta (fulton county)	13.2%	16.7%	61.9%	9.1%	16.1%	87.1%
Baltimore (city)	40.2%	10.0%	36.1%	22.4%	10.8%	69.3%
Boston (Suffolk County)	17.2%	23.3%	59.0%	8.5%	11.9%	79.5%
Chicago (Cook County)	29.2%	13.4%	34.7%	23.6%	13.7%	71.9%
Cleveland (Cuyahoga county)	12.0%	16.8%	46.6%	21.1%	2.1%	69.8%
Columbus (franklin county)	13.0%	18.2%	73.2%	8.2%	1.4%	82.9%
Detroit (Wayne County)	36.7%	26.9%	44.3%	17.2%	3.0%	64.5%
District of Columbia	15.3%	13.9%	46.5%	15.2%	12.2%	74.0%
Memphis (shelby county)	1.6%	24.6%	72.6%	11.4%	2.0%	86.0%
Milwaukee (county)	34.9%	13.6%	59.8%	18.5%	7.1%	85.4%
New York City	32.3%	14.1%	62.6%	19.4%	0.0%	82.0%
NYC (Bronx County)	35.9%	13.4%				
NYC (Kings County - Brooklyn)	37.5%	12.9%				
Philadelphia	22.9%	31.0%	45.6%	13.9%	16.0%	75.5%
St. Louis City	17.7%	18.0%	46.4%	26.6%	20.3%	93.4%

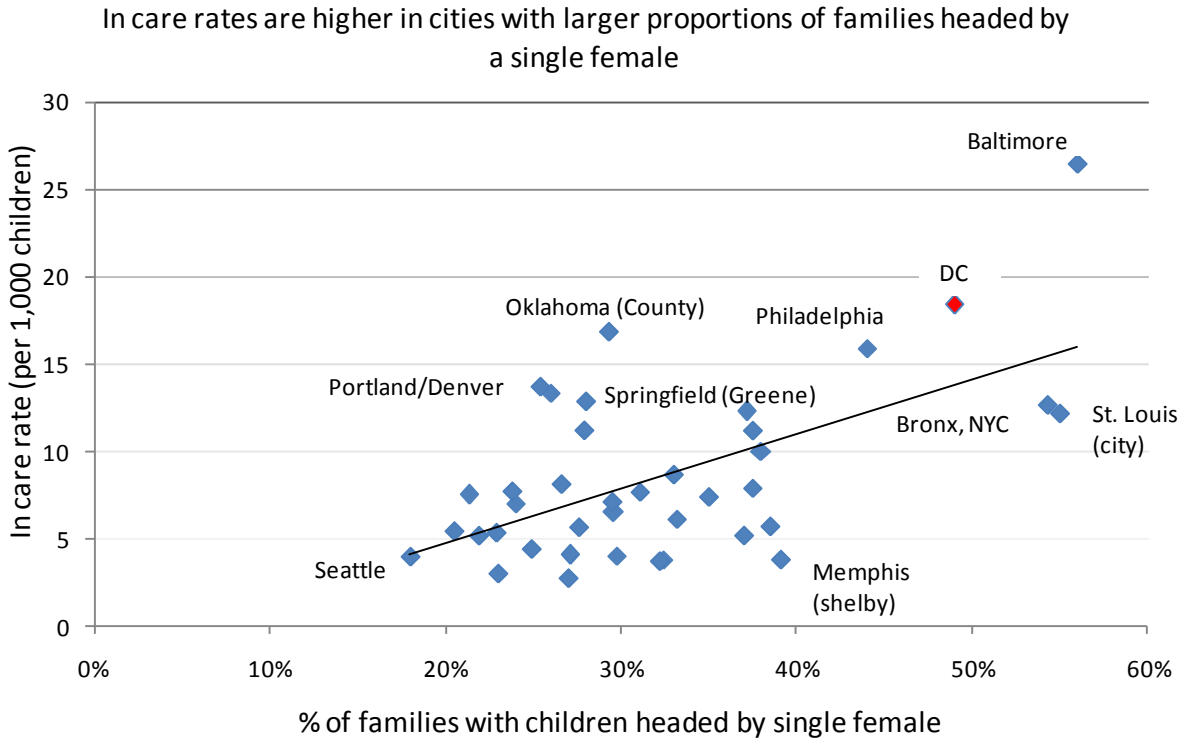## Relationship between In Care Rate and Demographics

An analysis of a larger selection of cities illustrates how the rate of children in out of home care is related to the percentage of families headed by a single female.[4] Similarly, cities in which the

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[3] *Rates are per 1,000 child population*
[4] *% single female headed is closely related to poverty status, and the two are inextricably linked to child welfare variables. This simple analysis should not be interpreted as a causal relationship between poverty and/or single parenthood and child maltreatment.*

percentage of families living in poverty is higher tend to have higher in-care rates. The graph below uses data from 39 large US counties or cities, including the five boroughs of New York City.

As shown, jurisdictions with higher percentages of families headed by a single female (which are also higher in measures of family poverty) have higher rates of children in care.

In care rates are higher in cities with larger proportions of families headed by a single female
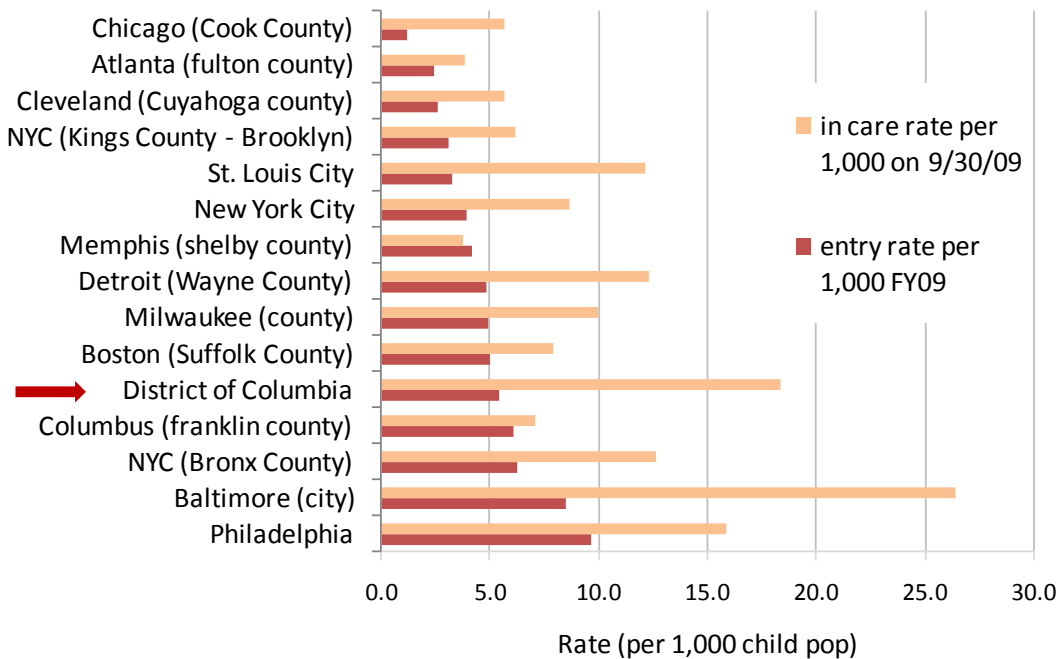
Rate of Entry and Rate In-Care

Comparing jurisdictions with varying populations is best done using a rate. The information that follows compares the entry rate – the number of children entering care for every 1,000 children in the population – and the in-care rate – the number of children in care on 9/30/09 for every 1,000 children in the population.

A large difference between a jurisdiction's entry rate and in-care rate is usually an indicator of relatively long length of stay in care.

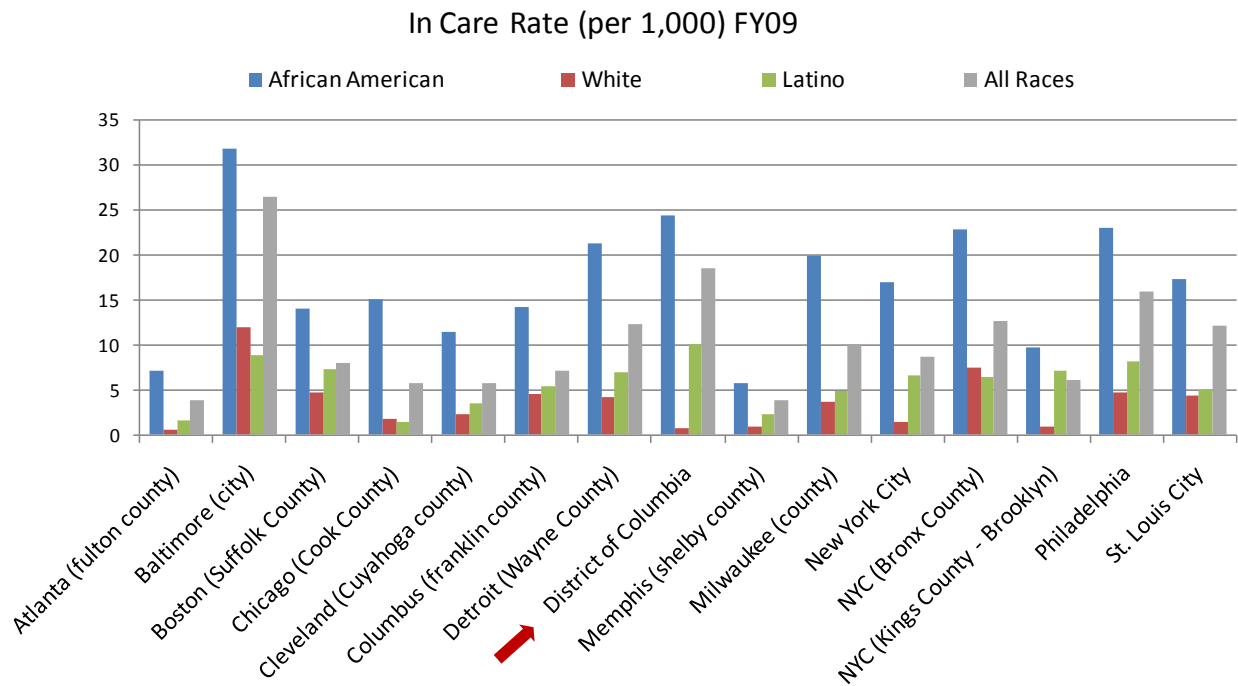On the following page, in-care rates are further disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Entry Rates and In-Care Rates

Rate (per 1,000 child pop)

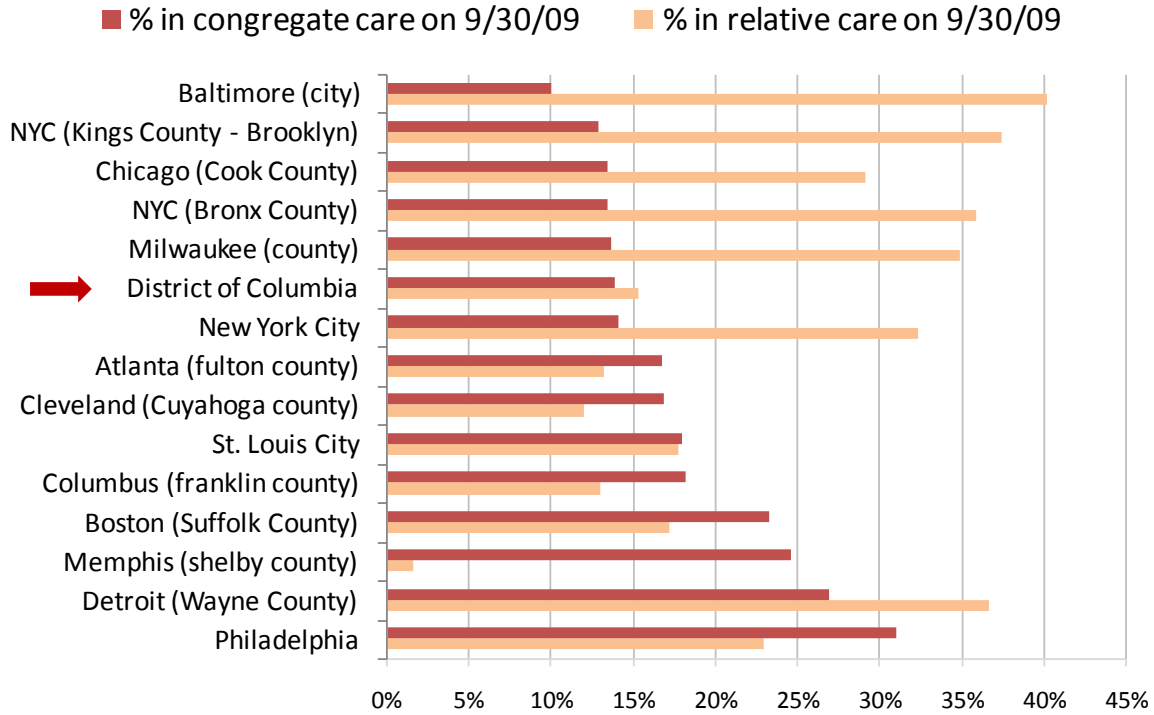## In Care Rate by Race/Ethnicity

Nationwide, entry rates and in-care rates are highest for African American and Native American children. This analysis does not include Native American children as they are not a large enough segment of the child population or in-care population in the majority of the selected cities.

As shown below, the in-care rate is highest for African American children in every jurisdiction. In-care rates in DC are similar to other large urban jurisdictions such as Philadelphia and the Bronx.

In Care Rate (per 1,000) FY09

Placement Type

Among these jurisdictions, AFCARS data indicate that Philadelphia has the highest proportion of children and youth placed in congregate care (group homes or institutions). DC seems to place relatively few children congregate care, but also relatively few children in relative homes.

■ % in congregate care on 9/30/09   ■ % in relative care on 9/30/09

Exits from Care (Exit Cohort)

In the District of Columbia, 74% of exits from care in FY09 were exits to permanency, predominantly through reunification (47%). 15% of exits were completed adoptions and 12% were exits to guardianship.

Unfortunately, AFCARS data are not set up to follow entry cohorts over time to determine the likelihood of achieving permanency for children entering care in recent years.