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AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF TRANSRACIAL PLACEMENTS IN ILLINOIS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this analysis is to provide an exploratory description of the geographic landscape of transracial placement in Illinois. This analysis is one component of a multi-component research study on transracial placements in Illinois, that focuses on supports needed for Black children and youth, particularly those placed in white foster families. The study features interviews with both Black caregivers and white caregivers of Black children and youth. The interviews elicit caregivers' experiences with the children as well as with extended family members, neighbors, schools, congregations, and other members of their social networks. The guiding questions framing the interview research are:

1. What strategies do Black caregivers/parents use to build positive racial identity development and promote integration in Black communities of Black children and youth in care?
2. What attitudes, knowledge, and skills do white caregivers and adoptive parents have in promoting the well-being and positive racial identity development of Black children and youth in care? What strategies do they use to address racial stressors and promote racial identity exploration and positive racial socialization of Black children and youth in care?
3. What resources are needed to prepare and support caregivers of Black children and youth with transracial placements in order to promote positive racial identity development and integration in Black communities? Among white families caring for Black children and youth, what are their strengths and needs for training and resources?
4. How can the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services modify policies and practices in order to support positive racial identity development and integration in Black communities for children and youth in care?

Our research team anticipates starting to report on findings from the interview component of the study in the summer of 2023. The context for developing the system of support relates to the overrepresentation of Black children and youth in the Illinois child welfare system, insufficient numbers of Black caregivers to help raise Black children experiencing abuse and neglect, racial bias in recruitment and retention policies and structures, unmet needs for support and training of white caregivers with transracial placements, systemic racism, and the particular contexts of racism experienced by children and adults in transracial foster families.

METHODS

Data for all Illinois youth in care on August 18, 2022, was provided by the DCFS Strategy and Performance team. For this analysis, this population was narrowed to the 6,299 youth who were in non-relative foster home placements in Illinois (excluding out-of-state placements). Specifically, this included youth in foster home adoption, foster home boarding, foster home guardianship, foster home private agency, and foster home specialized placements. The data were filtered using PowerBi, analyzed in Excel, and geocoded and mapped in ArcGIS. To allow for the variance across the state to be visible, most of the scales of the included maps have a distinct category reflecting Cook County. This study was approved by both the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board and the Institutional Review Board of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

FINDINGS

Youth in Care in Transracial Placements

The maps in this section illustrate transracial placements across races. Figure 1 is a map by county of the 6,299 children in foster homes in Illinois on August 18, 2022. Nearly every county in the state had children in foster home placements, except for Pope County. At the time of the analysis, the largest count for a county in the state was Cook County, with 1,813 children in foster home placements. Will County followed this with 324. Peoria and St. Clair County had 101 - 150 children in foster home placements. And DuPage, Lake, Madison, Sangamon, and Winnebago counties had between 76 - 100 youth in foster home placements. All other counties had 100 or fewer youth in foster home placements.

Figure 2 is a map by county of the 1,676 children who were in transracial foster homes. Eighteen counties had no children placed in transracial foster homes (Alexander, Bureau, Carroll, Calhoun, Gallatin, Hamilton, Henderson, Jasper, Jersey, Lawrence, Macoupin, Massac, Pope, Schuyler, Scott, Union, Washington, Wabash counties). At the time of the analysis, Cook County had 434 children in transracial placements, followed by Will County with 199 children. DuPage, Lake, Madison, Peoria, Sangamon, St. Claire, and Winnebago counties each had between 51 - 100 children in transracial foster home placements. All other counties had 50 or fewer children in transracial placements.

Figure 3 is a map of the percentage of children in transracial foster homes by county. Ford and Grundy had 51 - 50% of children in foster homes in transracial homes. Eight counties had between 41 - 50% of the children in foster homes in transracial homes (Champaign, De Witt, Hardin, Hancock, Jo Daviess, Kendall, Logan, and Menard counties). There were 23 counties where 31 - 40% of the children in foster homes were in transracial homes. Of note, while Cook County has the largest number of transracial placements, it is just one of 19 counties where the percentage of foster home placements that were transracial falls between 21 - 30%. In the remaining counties, the percentage of transracial foster home placements falls at 20% or less.

Figure 1. Number of Youth in Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022

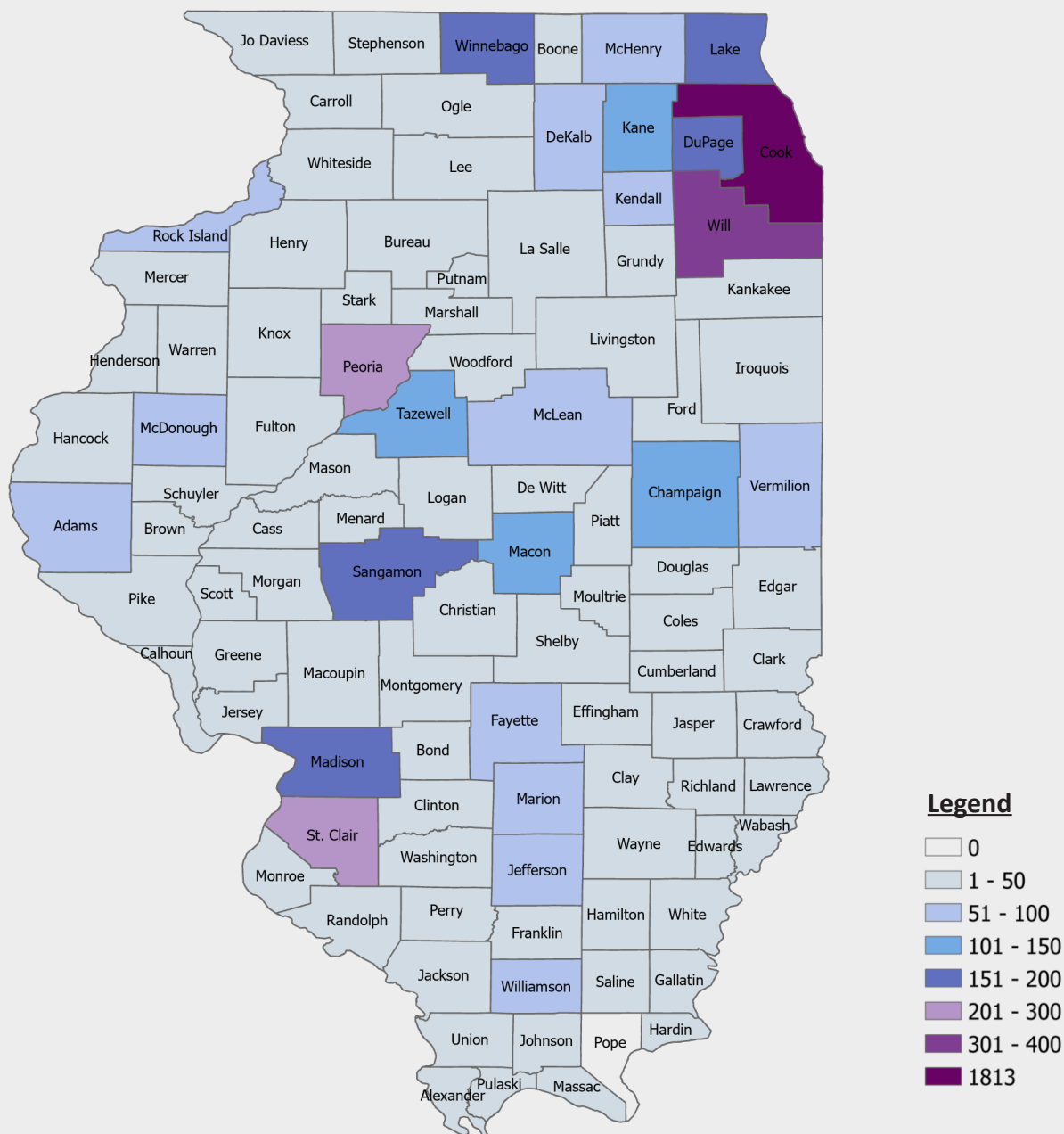


Figure 2. Number of Youth in Transracial Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022

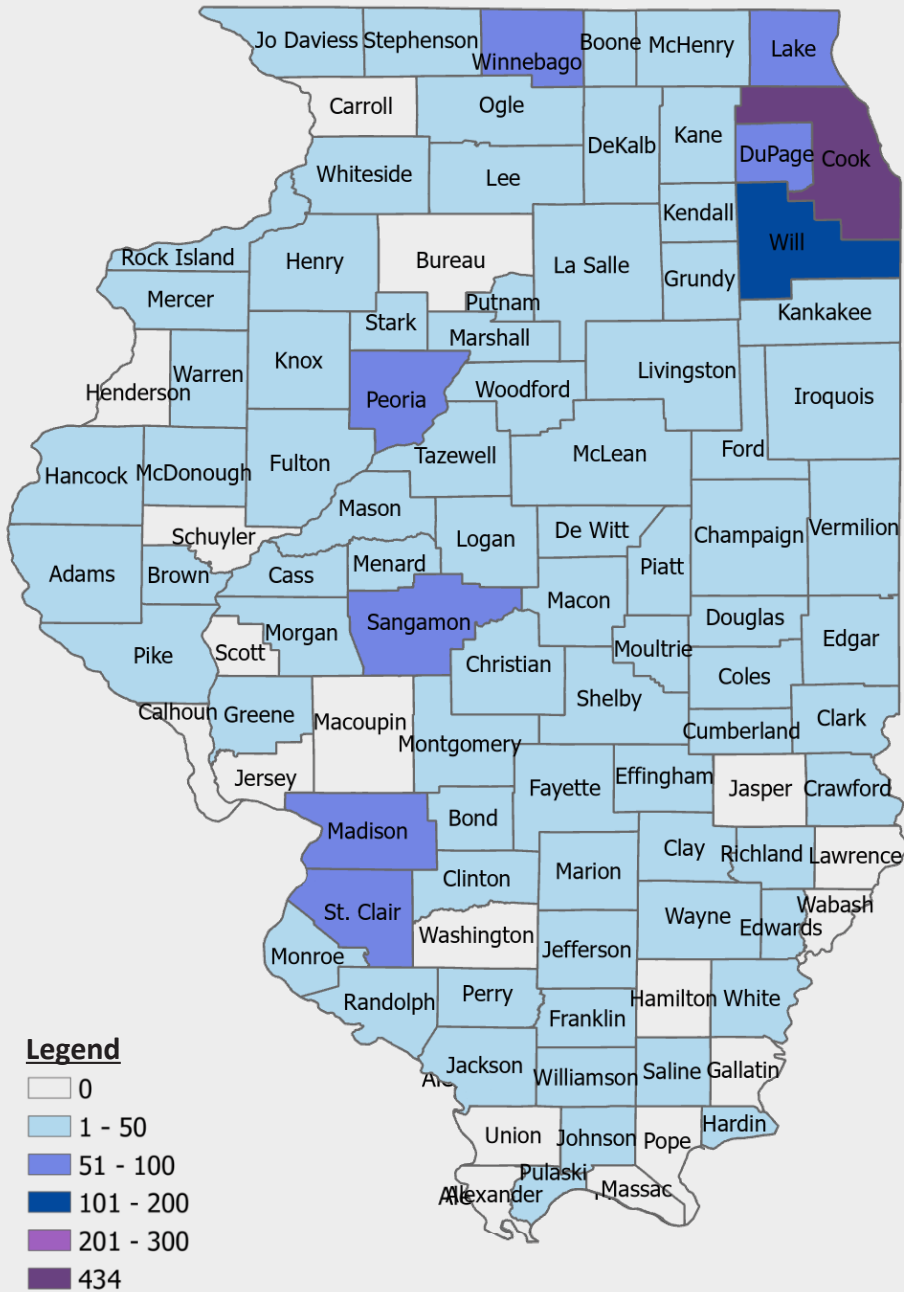
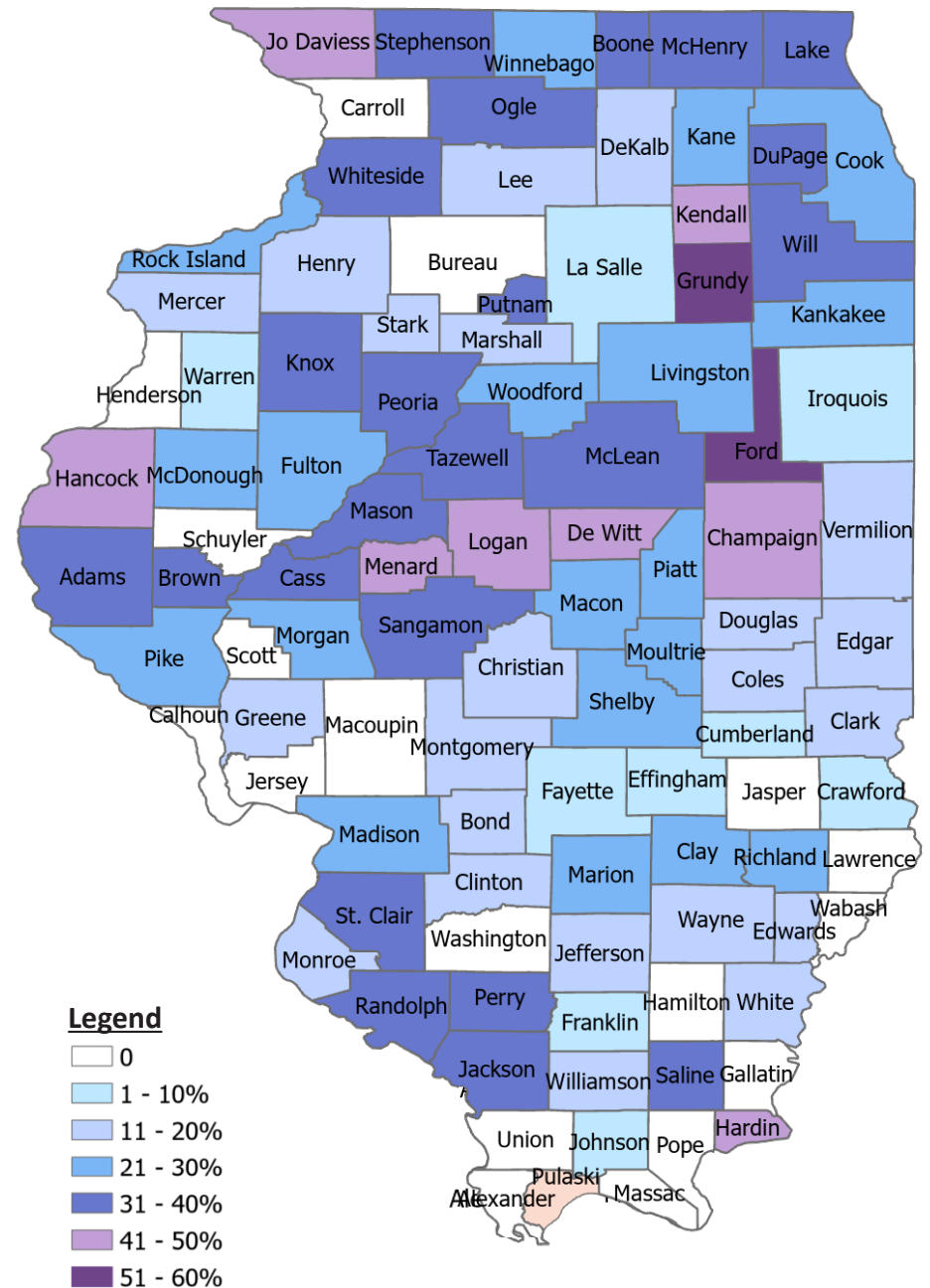


Figure 3. Percent of Youth in Transracial Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022



Black Youth in Care in Transracial Placements

The maps in this section illustrate transracial placements of Black children. Figure 4 is a map by county of the 2,841 Black children in foster home placements in Illinois on August 18, 2022. Nineteen counties did not have any Black children in foster care placements. This includes Pope County where there were no children of any race in foster care placements. At the time of the analysis, the largest count by county in the state was Cook County, with 1,326 Black children in foster home placements. Outside of Cook, the next three counties by count were Will County (178), St. Clair County (143), and Peoria County (117). Four counties had between 50 – 100 Black children in foster care, and the remaining counties had less than 50 Black children.

Figure 5 is a map by county of the 1,256 Black children that were in transracial foster homes. This includes 86 Black children that were in homes where the caregivers’ race was unknown. Twenty counties had no Black children that were in transracial foster homes. This includes the eighteen counties with no transracial foster homes and Hardin and Pulaski counties. At the time of analysis, Cook County had 317 Black children in transracial placements, the largest count by county in the state. Neighboring counties Will County (76) and Lake County (60) had the next two largest counts of Black transracial placements in the state, followed by Peoria County (59). Nine counties each had 25 - 50 Black children in transracial foster placements (DuPage, Kane, Madison, McHenry, McLean, St. Clair, Sangamon, Tazewell, and Winnebago counties). The rest of the counties, representing most of the state, had 1 - 25 Black children in transracial foster placements.

Figure 6 is a map of the percentage of Black children in transracial foster homes by county. There were fifty-eight counties in the state where 80 - 100% of the Black youth in foster homes were in transracial homes. Most of these counties are designated as rural, with the exception of DeKalb, Lake, McHenry, Rock Island, and Tazewell counties. Eleven counties had 61 - 79% of Black children in foster homes were placed in transracial homes, including three urban counties, Lake, McLean, and Madison counties. There were nine counties where 41 - 59% of the Black children in foster care homes were in transracial homes. The remaining four counties, including Cook County, had between 21 – 40% of the Black children in foster homes placed in transracial homes (Cook, Kankakee, La Salle, and St. Claire counties).

Figure 4. Number of Black Youth in Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022

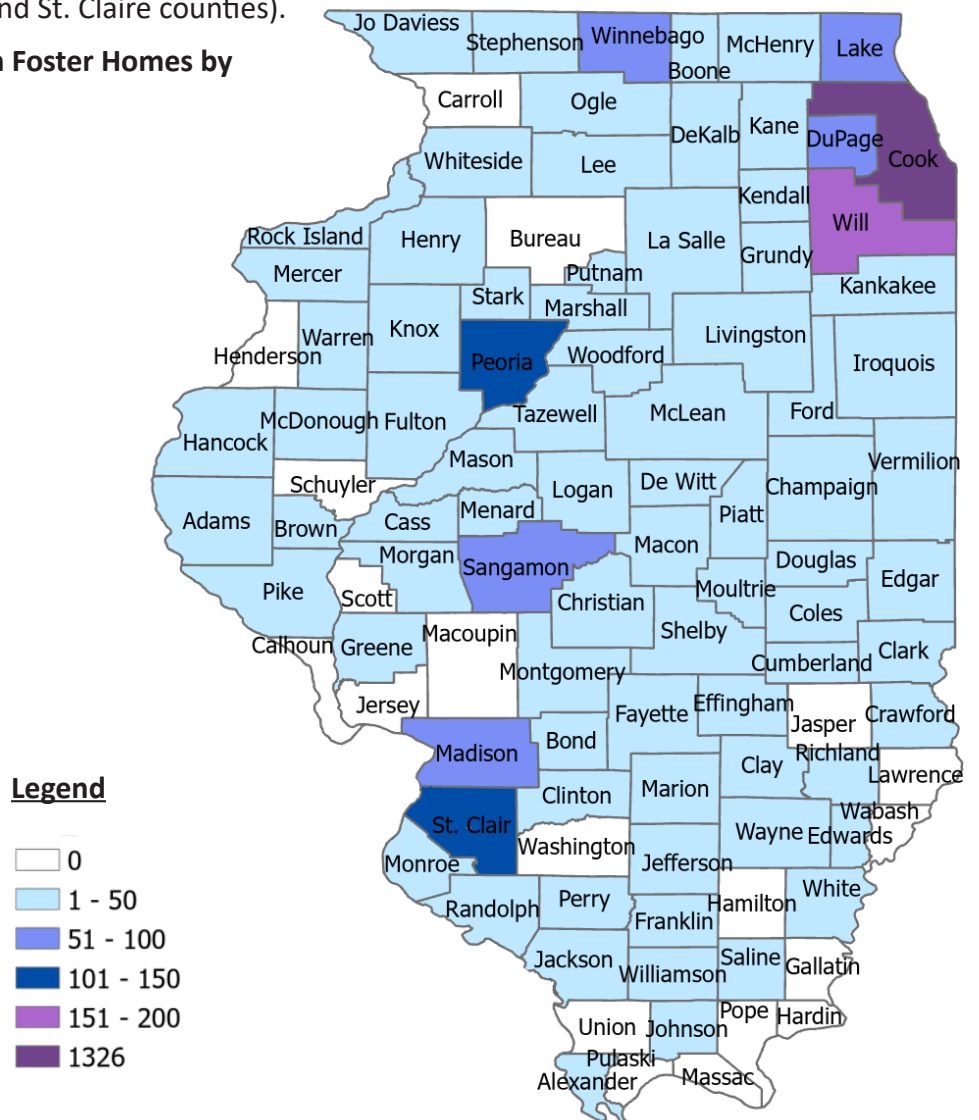


Figure 5. Number of Black Youth in Transracial Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022

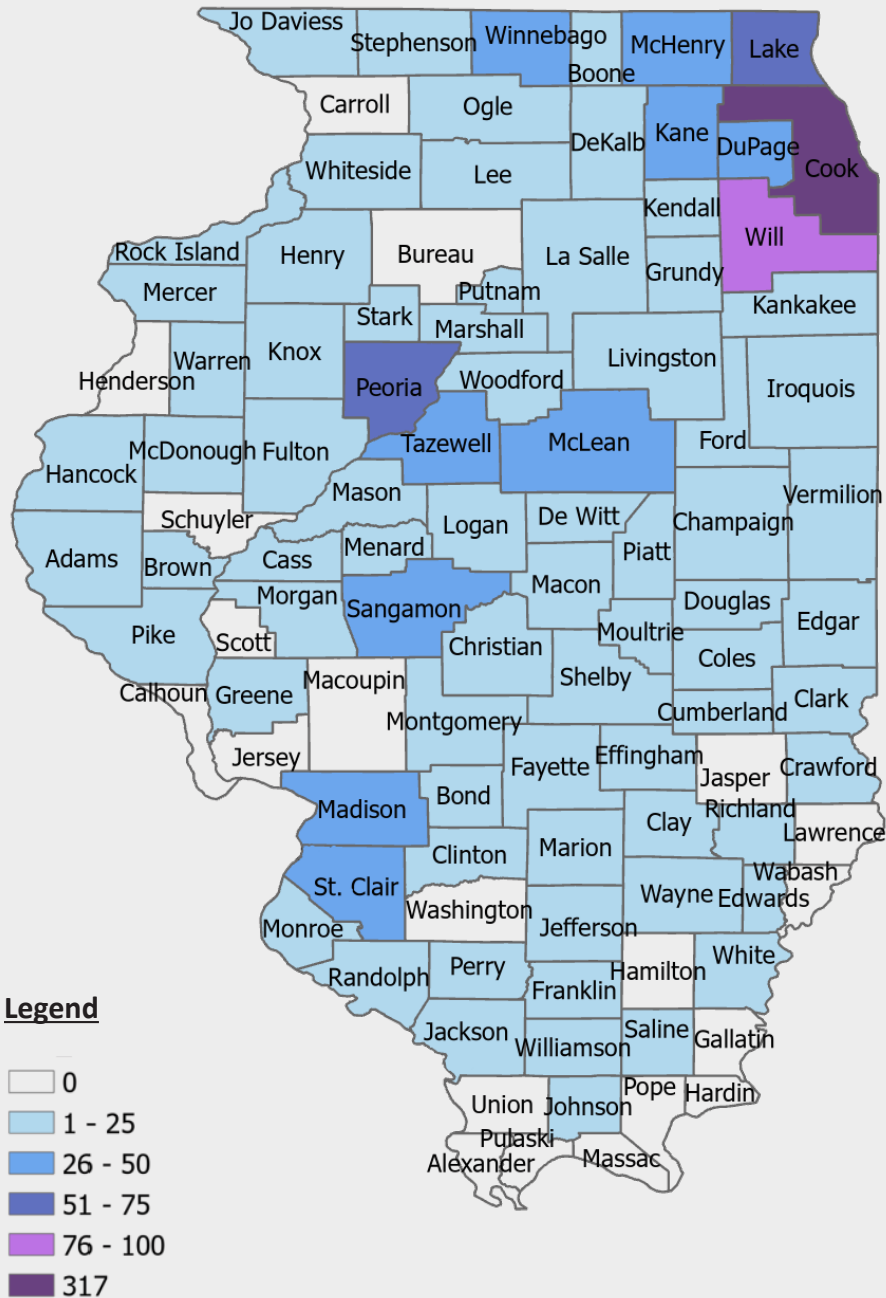
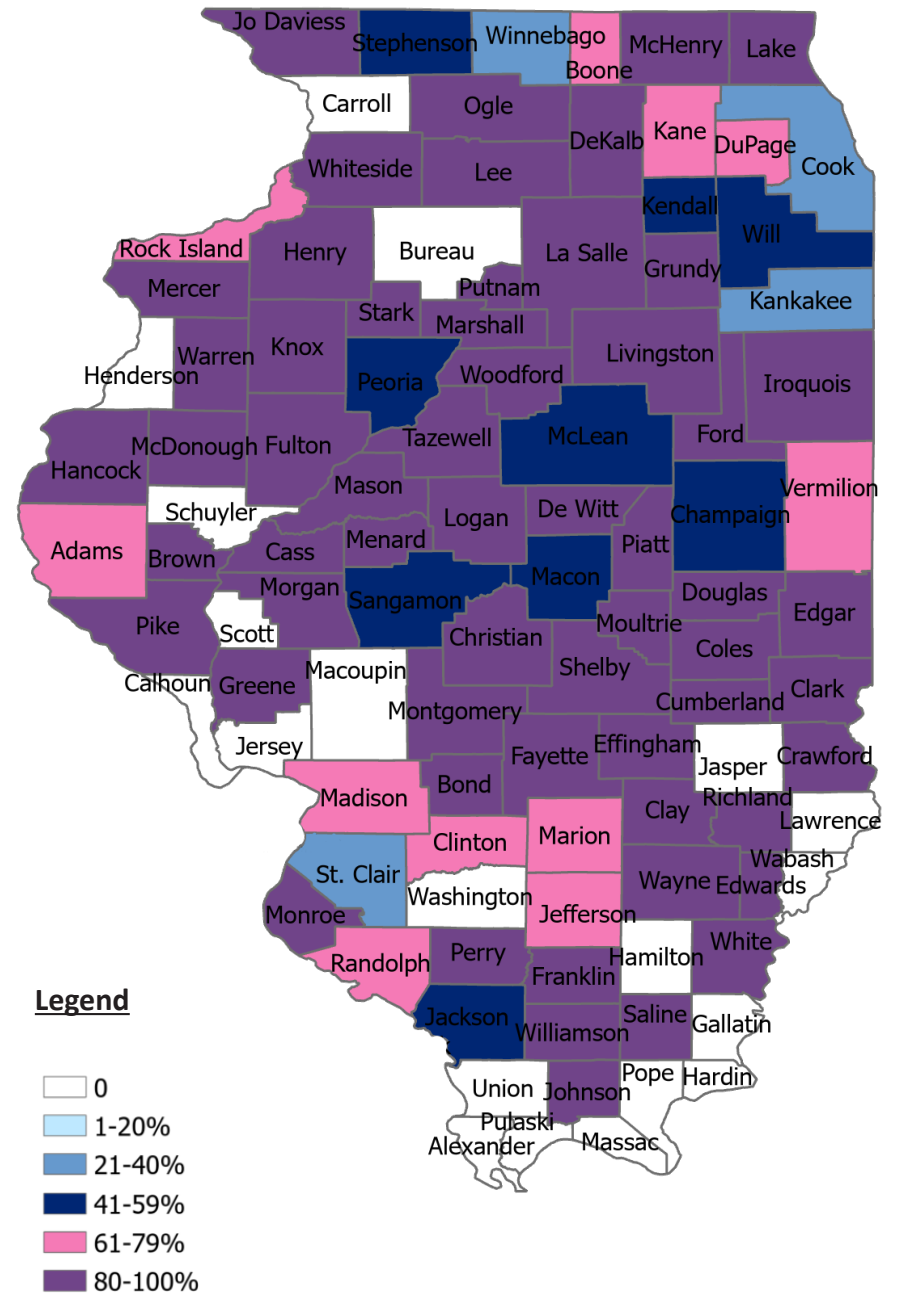


Figure 6. Percent of Black Youth in Transracial Foster Homes by County on August 18, 2022



Transracial Placements by Race and Latinx Ethnicity

Of the 6,042 children in care placed in foster homes where the primary caregivers' race is known, 1,661 (28%) are placed in transracial homes (Table 1). The percentage of children in transracial homes varies notably across the different children's races. While there were small numbers of children in foster homes that were Asian; or Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, most of these youth (100%, 70%, respectively). Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander were grouped together as an alternative to redacting them or labeling them as *other*. The largest racial subgroup of children in care placed in foster homes were White children. The percentage of White children in transracial homes (14%) was notably lower than the statewide average. In contrast, the percentage of Black children in transracial homes was 43%, notably higher than the state average.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine whether or not the proportion of children placed in transracial foster homes varied by race, or whether these differences were due to chance. The analysis included Black, White, and other non-White races and their placement with a primary caregiver of the same race or in a transracial placement. While 14.1% of White youth were placed in a transracial foster home, 42.5% of Black children and 70% of Native American children were placed in transracial foster homes. Compared to White youth, Black youth and other non-White youth were far more likely to be placed in a transracial foster home, and this difference between groups was statistically significant [$X^2(2, n = 5,999) = 629.4, p < .0001$].

Table 1

Summary of Placements by Race for Youth in Foster Homes in Illinois on August 18, 2022

Race	Count Children in Foster Homes	Count Placements with Caregiver Race Known	Count (%) Children in Same Race Foster Homes	Count (%) Children in Transracial Foster Homes ¹
Asian	15	14	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
Black/ African American	2,841	2,755	1,558 (56.6%)	1,170 (42.5%)
Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	24	20	6 (30.0%)	14 (70%)
White	3,398	3,251	2,788 (85.8%)	463 (14.1%)
Unknown	21	18	-	-
Total	6,299	6,042	4,352 (72.0%)	1,661 (27.5%)

1. Cases where the caregivers' or children's race were unknown, were excluded from the definition of transracial foster homes for this table and associated analysis.

Two-thirds of Latinx children (67%) in foster care placements were placed with a primary caregiver who is not Latinx (Table 2). This percentage is heavily driven by the White Latinx children placed in same-race households. Only two of the 42 Black Latinx children who were placed in a home where the ethnicity of the caregiver is known were placed with a Latinx caregiver.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine if there is a difference between the proportion of Latinx children placed in same race households and Latinx children placed with Latinx caregivers. The analysis included the Latinx and Non-Latinx ethnicity of the caregiver and their placement with a primary caregiver of the same race or in a transracial placement. The 60 cases where the race of the caregiver was unknown were excluded from this analysis. The findings indicated that Latinx children whose race does not match their primary caregiver were also far more likely to be in non-Latinx homes [$X^2(1, n = 471) = 24.86, p < .0001$].

Transracial Placements by Region and Urbanicity Status

Across the state, 1,636 (26%) of children in foster homes are in transracial homes (including those where the caregivers' race is unknown). The variance in transracial foster placements across sub-regions (Table 3), for the most part, is within a couple of percentage points. The exceptions are 5A Marion sub-region, where the transracial foster placement rate is 12 points lower at 15%, and 2A Aurora sub-region, where the rate is 6 points higher at 32%. The rate of Black children living in transracial foster homes is notably higher at 44% than state average (1,256). This rate of transracial placement of Black children and youth varies from 24% in Cook County to 80% in the 5A Marion sub-region. Outside of Cook County, the transracial placement rate for Black children and youth in every region is higher than the state average.

Two chi-squared of independence tests were completed. The first test examined the extent to which transracial placement rates for Black children and youth varied by region (Central, Cook, Northern, and Southern Regions). The analysis showed that the regional differences were not due to chance, and were statistically significant [$\chi^2(3, n = 42,841) = 443.8, p < .0001$]. Compared to the rate of transracial foster home placement for Black children in Cook County, Black children placed in foster homes outside of Cook County were much more likely to be placed in a transracial home. The second test examined the extent to which transracial placement rates varied by urbanicity of the placement (categorized as urban, rural, Cook County). In rural areas, 89% of Black children are placed in transracial foster homes, compared to 53% in non-Cook urban areas and 24% in Cook County. Compared to Black children placed in foster homes in specifically in Cook or other urban areas, Black children in rural areas were far more likely to be placed in a transracial foster home [$\chi^2(2, n = 2,841) = 560.5, p < .0001$].

Table 2
Placement Type by Race and Latinx Ethnicity for Youth in Foster Homes in Illinois on August 18, 2022

Placement Type	Child's Race	Count of Latinx Children in Foster Homes	Count of Latinx Children in Foster Homes Where the Ethnicity of Caregiver is Known	Count (Percent) of Latinx Children in Foster Homes with a Latinx Primary Caregiver	Count (Percent) of Latinx Children in Foster Homes with a Non-Latinx Caregiver ¹
Primary Caregiver Race Matches the Child	Black	21	15	0	15 (100%)
	White	391	348	109 (31.3%)	239 (68.7%)
	Other	0	0	-	-
Primary Caregiver Race is Does Not Match the Child	Black	25	24	2 (8.3%)	22 (91.7%)
	White	119	82	4 (4.9%)	77 (95.1%)
	Other	4	3	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)
Primary Caregiver Race is Unknown ¹	Black	4	3	3 (100%)	0
	White	71	54	53 (98.1%)	2 (1.9%)
	Other	0	0	0	0
	Unknown	6	6	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)
Total		641	535	176 (32.9%)	359 (67.1%)

1. Unknown race and unknown ethnicity include could not be verified, declined to identify, not reported, and unknown.

Table 3
Transracial Placements by Region and Youth Race in Illinois on August 18, 2022

Region	Subregion	Count Children in Foster Placements	Count (%) Children in Transracial Placements ¹	Count Black Children in Placements	Count (%) Black Transracial Children in Placements ¹
Central	1B Peoria Region	709	195 (27.5%)	237	169 (71.3%)
	3A Springfield Region	522	136 (26.1%)	146	108 (74.0%)
	3B Champaign Region	606	167 (27.6%)	195	130 (66.7%)
Cook	Cook	1813	434 (23.9%)	1326	317 (23.9%)
Northern	1A Rockford Region	425	118 (27.8%)	152	86 (56.6%)
	2A Aurora Region	1049	337 (32.1%)	477	279 (58.5%)
Southern	4A East St. Louis Region	561	153 (27.3%)	207	86 (41.5%)
	5A Marion Region	614	96 (15.6%)	101	81 (80.2%)
Statewide	All	6299	1636 (26.0%)	2841	1256 (44.2%)

1. Includes children in cases where the caregivers' race is unknown.

Table 4
Transracial Placements by County Rural and Urban Status and Race in Illinois on August 18, 2022

Urban / Rural Status ¹	Count Children in Foster Placements	Count (%) Children in Transracial Placements	Count Black Children in Placements	Count (%) Black Transracial Children in Placements
Rural	1746	365 (20.9%)	371	330 (88.9%)
Urban – Excluding Cook	2740	877 (32.0%)	1144	609 (53.2%)
Cook	1813	434 (23.9%)	1326	317 (23.9%)
Total	6299	1636 (26.0%)	2841	1,256(44.2%)

1. Illinois Primary Health Care Association. (2020). [Illinois counties by rural/urban classification](#).

LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ANALYSES

As an exploratory study, this analysis has several limitations that are important to acknowledge. First, one of the most critical limitations of this analysis is that it only accounts for the primary caregivers' race and Latinx ethnicity. The study did not account for the race and ethnicity of other caregivers in the home, whose race may or may not reflect the children in their care. Future analysis could be improved by adding the race and ethnicity of additional caregivers in the home. Additionally, the analysis only reflects a single race for each child and caregiver. This limitation reflects the current lack of quality data on multiracial providers and children that will hopefully be improved, allowing for a more accurate picture of the racial landscape and experiences of both the youth and caregivers.

The second limitation is that this analysis reflects the landscape of youth in foster homes at a single point in time. A complete analysis would look across time to understand the trends in transracial placements and the intersections between children's race and ethnicity and that of the caregivers in foster homes. Finally, this analysis was limited to youth placed within the geographic borders of the state of Illinois and to only those placed in foster homes. This is reflective of the specific goals of the larger study and the type of geographic analysis. Understanding the full landscape of placements would provide important context for future analysis. Additional context could be provided by integrating census demographics and other regional information into the analysis. This would allow for a more meaningful regional analysis.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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