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Governor Tony Evers  
 Secretary Emilie Amundson  
 Secretary's Office

July 23, 2019

Representative Barbara Dittich and Honorable Members of the Speaker's Task Force on Adoption  
 Room 19 North, State Capitol  
 Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Barbara Dittich and Honorable Members of the Speaker's Task Force on Adoption;

Thank you for the opportunity to expand upon our earlier conversation regarding adoption in Wisconsin. We appreciate your dedication and passion towards ensuring Wisconsin's children and families are thriving. Below, please find additional information you requested at the June 19, 2019, Speaker's Task Force on Adoption hearing.

**What is the "supply and demand" for adoptive children?**

The below tables show for the last three years: (1) the total number of children in out-of-home care (OHC) on December 31 and (2) the total number of public adoptions, which is the number of children who exited OHC to adoption.

As shown in Table 2 below, for the past three years the average annual number of children adopted from the children welfare system is 712, accounting for 14.1% of all children who existed out-of-home care annually.

<b>Table 1: Number of Children in WI in Out-of-Home Care (OHC) on December 31</b>			
	Dec. 31, 2016	Dec. 31, 2017	Dec. 31, 2018
Statewide	7841	7797	8247
Milwaukee	2159	2181	2201
Balance of State	5682	5616	6046

<b>Table 2: Public Adoptions in CY 2016-2018</b>				
	CY 2016	CY 2017	CY 2018	Average CY 2016-18
Number of children exited OHC to adoption	672	717	748	712
Total number of children exited OHC to adoption, guardianship, reunification, aged out, or other discharge outcomes	4802	5065	5325	5064
Number of exits to adoptions as % of all exits	14.0%	14.2%	14.0%	14.1%

Due to the Department's very limited role in private adoptions, the Department does not have data on the supply and demand for private adoptions.

**What are the differences between guardianship and adoption, and under what circumstances is guardianship used versus adoption?**

Guardianship and adoption are both recognized as legal permanency options in Wisconsin that are intended to provide children with safe, stable, and permanent homes when living with their biological parents is no longer an option.

The biggest difference between the two relates to birth parents' rights. In an adoption, birth parent rights are terminated, and there is no longer a legal relationship between the child and birth parents. In a guardianship, birth parent rights are not severed, and there remains a legal relationship between the child and birth parents. There are circumstances under which a guardianship may be vacated and the birth parents resume custody of the child. There are different types of guardianship in Wisconsin, with different thresholds and circumstances for a parent to petition for a child's return.

There are various reasons a county/family may choose guardianship over adoption, including:

- **Eligibility to adopt.** Criteria for adoption are more stringent than guardianship, and not all caregivers may be eligible for adoption.
- **Long-term plans for the child and family.** For example, the child may be older and feel that guardianship is more appropriate for them or the parents circumstances may be temporary.
- **Changing family relationships/roles.** Especially in relative situations, caregivers may not want to change family dynamics through a termination of parental rights/adoption (e.g., grandma may not want to become mom).
- **The benefits that caregivers may be eligible for under an adoption versus a guardianship.** Depending on the type of guardianship or the type of adoption, families and children may be eligible for different financial assistance or services. This eligibility may impact a family's decision on permanency options.

**What is the status of the Department's effort to undertake a study of child welfare caseloads in Wisconsin?**

Based on the results of a competitive procurement process initiated by the Department in March 2019, the Department plans to contract with the firm ICF Inc., LLC, for the completion of a workload study of the Wisconsin child welfare system. The projected contract start date is August 1, 2019, and the projected study completion date is July 31, 2020. Both the projected contract start date and study completion date are subject to possible change based on further discussions between the Department and the contractor.

**Understanding that different agencies have different fees, does DCF have an estimate of costs of the different items over the course of the adoption?**

DCF does not have an estimate of costs of the different items families pay for over the course of the private adoption process. Wisconsin statutes, s. 48.913, specifies allowable costs.

**Is DCF aware of how the majority of birth mothers are referred to adoption agencies? Do they go through DCF and are referred to agencies in their region? Are there programs in certain areas that will refer mothers to these agencies**

DCF is not involved in individual private adoptions. DCF is responsible for monitoring the child placing agencies involved in private adoptions for compliance with administrative rule and statute pertaining to the

agencies' operations and is not involved with how agencies work with birth mothers or locate birth mothers. DCF contracts with the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families which can provide information to birth mothers about the different adoption agencies, and their contact information. If a birth mother searches the DCF website, they would be referred to the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families.

**Have any unaccompanied minor immigrants being placed with families and/or adopted in recent months in Wisconsin?**

The Department is not aware of any unaccompanied minor immigrants being adopted in recent months in Wisconsin.

**What is the racial and ethnic background of: (a) public adoptions children; (b) the biological parents of public adoptions children; and (c) the adoptive parents of public adoptions children?**

See Attachment A. Note that a person's race and ethnicity are self-identified; in the case of young children, parents specify the race and ethnicity of the child. People of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race.

**Please provide the number of children who aged out of the child welfare system in the last ten years.**

See Attachment A. As shown in the chart, the number of youth who aged out of out-of-home care without achieving a permanent home through reunification, adoption, or guardianship has dropped significantly from 467 in 2009 to 294 in 2018.

Again, we thank you for your continued dedication to Wisconsin's children and Families. If you have any additional questions, please contact Fredi Bove at [frediellen.bove@wi.gov](mailto:frediellen.bove@wi.gov) or Nadya Perez-Reyes at [nadya.perez-reyes@wi.gov](mailto:nadya.perez-reyes@wi.gov).

Sincerely,



Jeff Pertl  
Deputy Secretary, Department of Children and Families

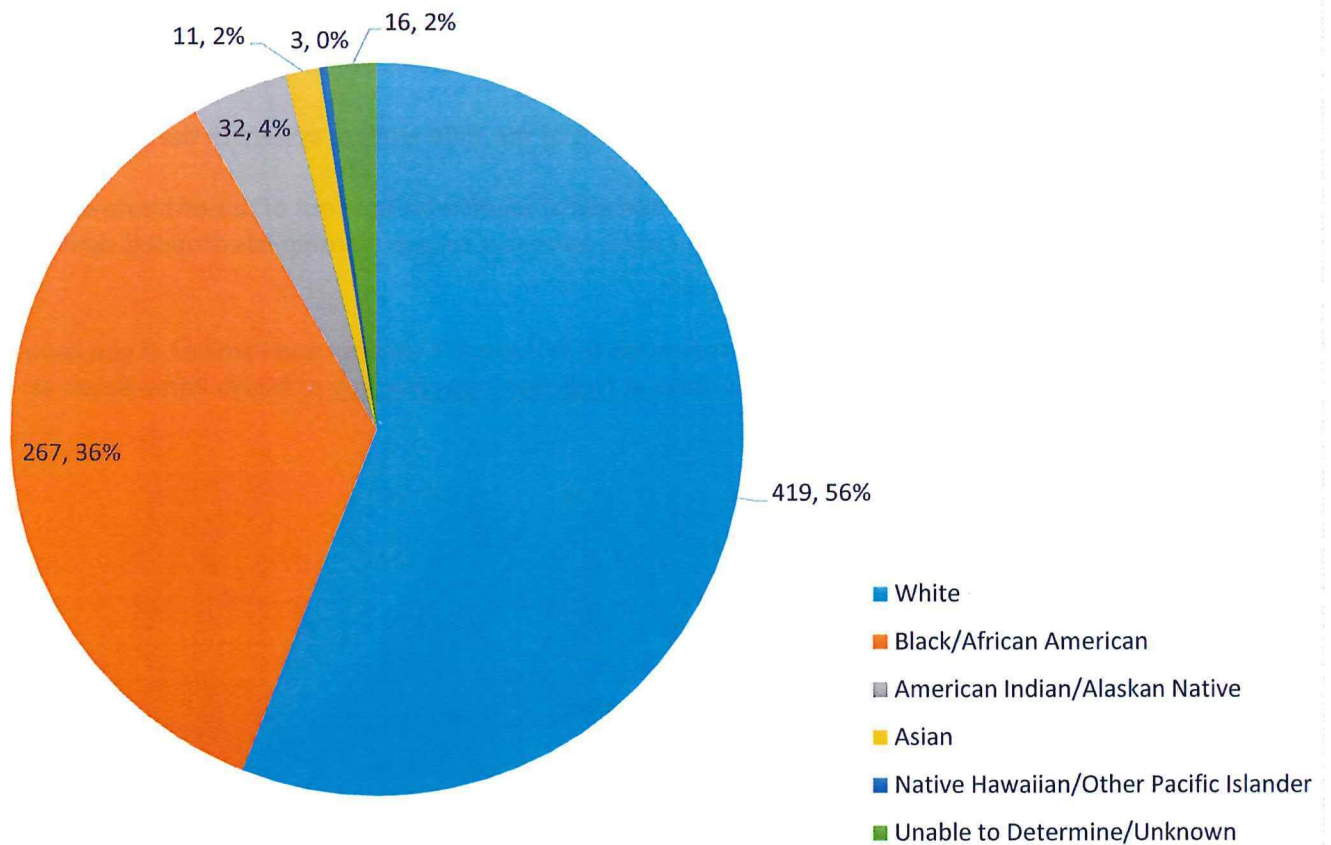
## ATTACHMENT A

### RACIAL INFORMATION FOR 2018 PUBLIC ADOPTION CHILDREN, ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND BIRTH PARENTS

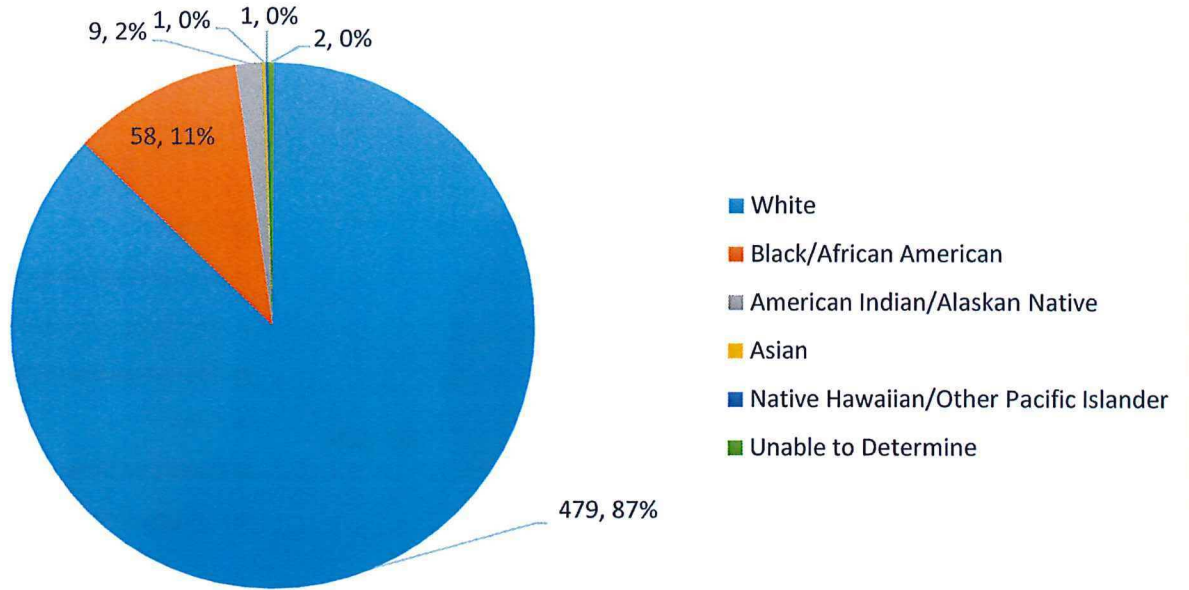
Note: A person's race and ethnicity are self-identified; in the case of young children, parents specify the race and ethnicity of the child. People of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race.

*Total numbers for children and parents differ due to sibling groups, whether there is a second adoptive parent, and whether birth mothers/fathers are identified.*

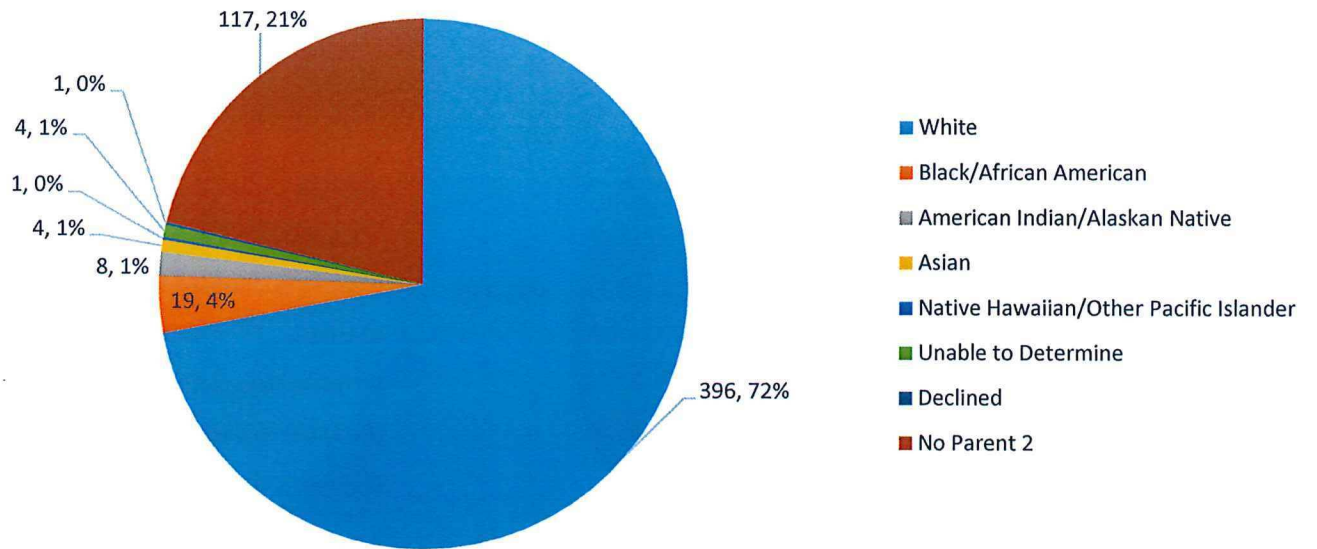
### Race of Public Adoption Children (Statewide)



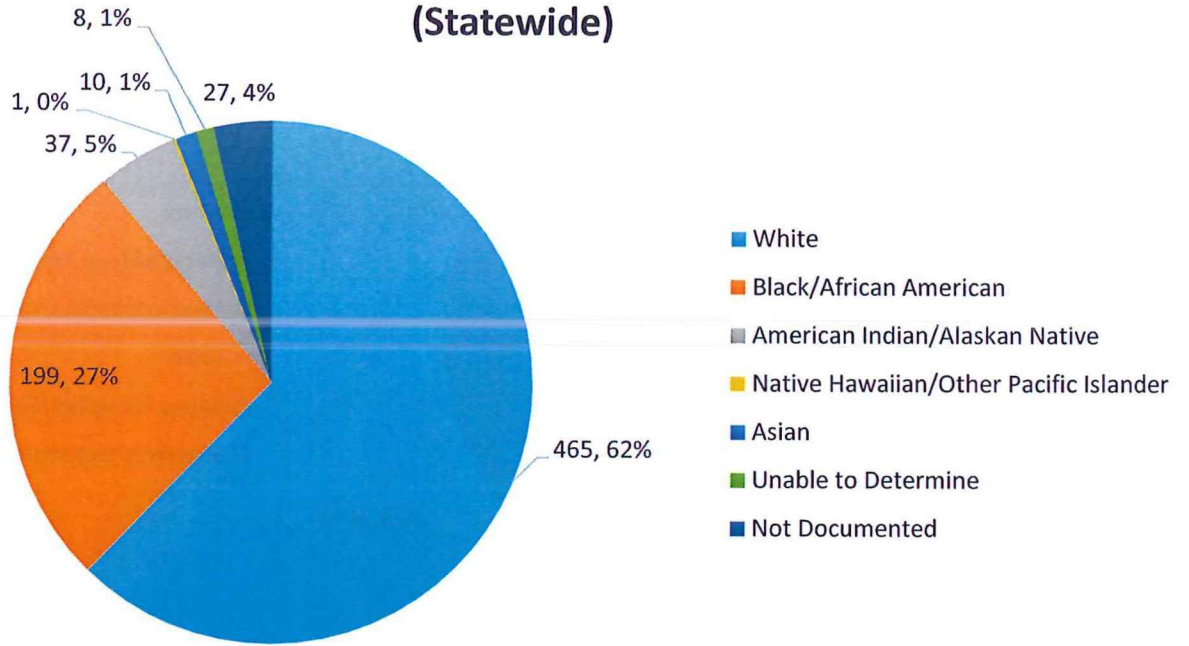
### Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 1 (Statewide)



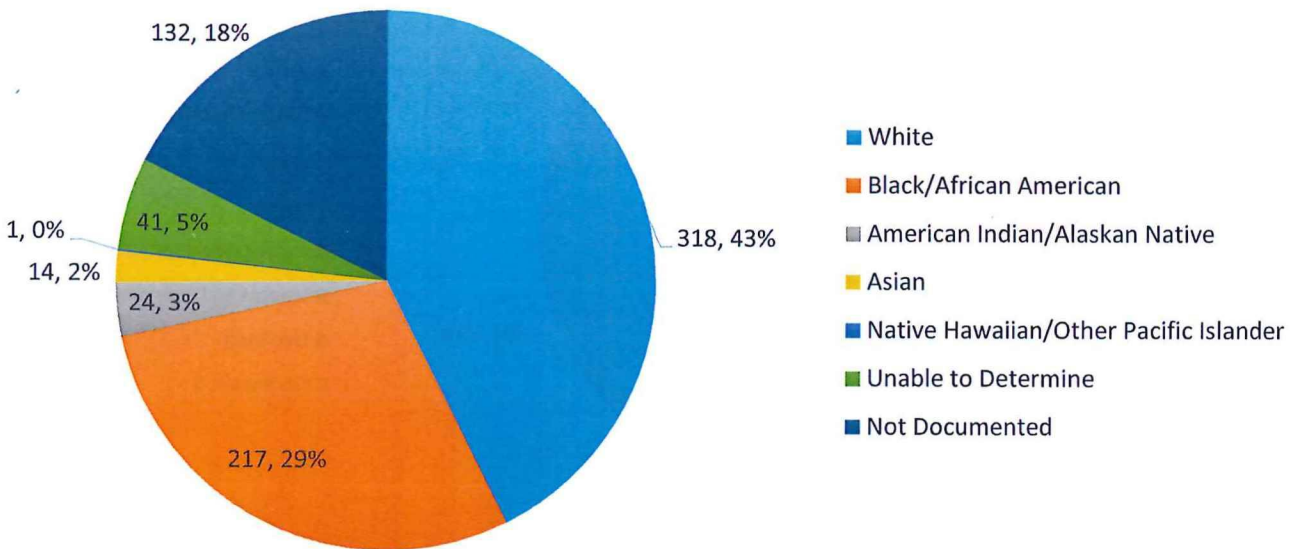
### Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 2, i.e. spouse (Statewide)



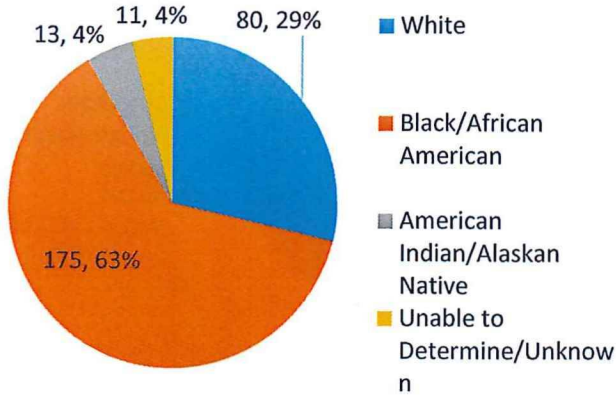
### Race of Public Adoption Birth Mother (Statewide)



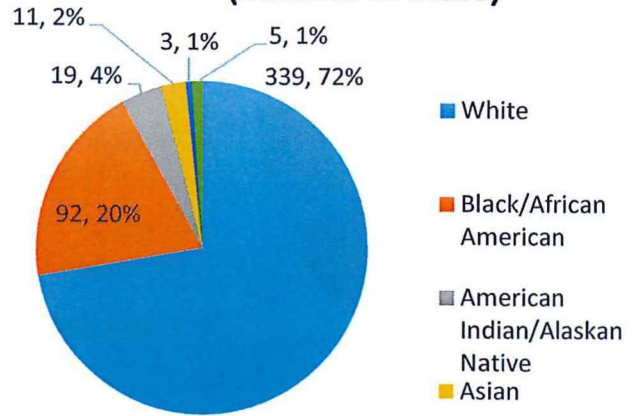
### Race of Public Adoption Birth Father (Statewide)



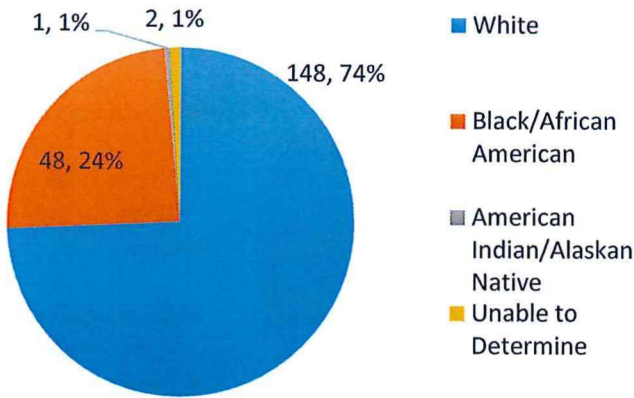
**Race of Public Adoption Children (Milwaukee)**



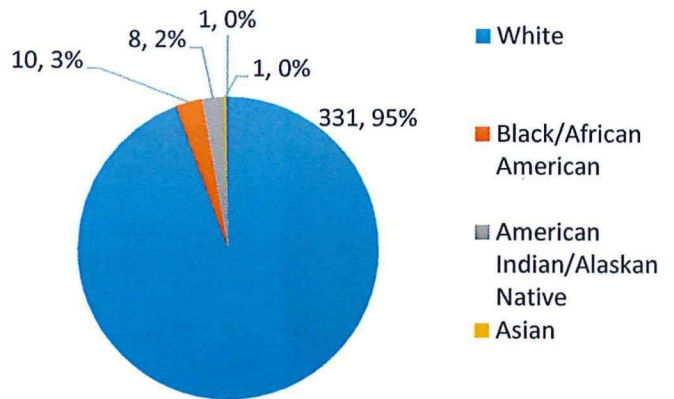
**Race of Public Adoption Children (Balance of State)**



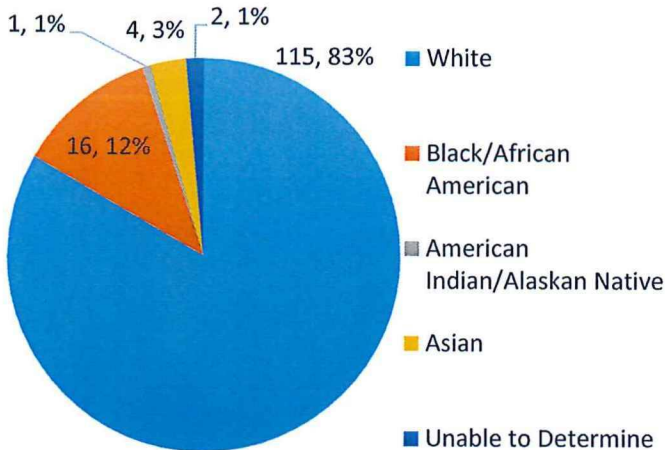
**Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 1 (Milwaukee)**



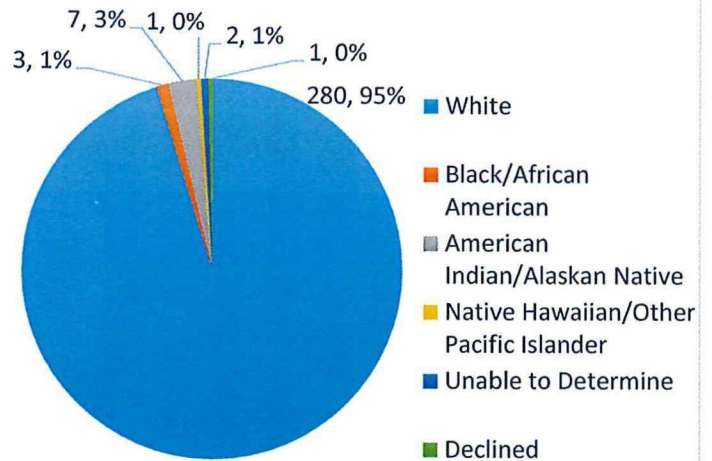
**Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 1 (Balance of State)**



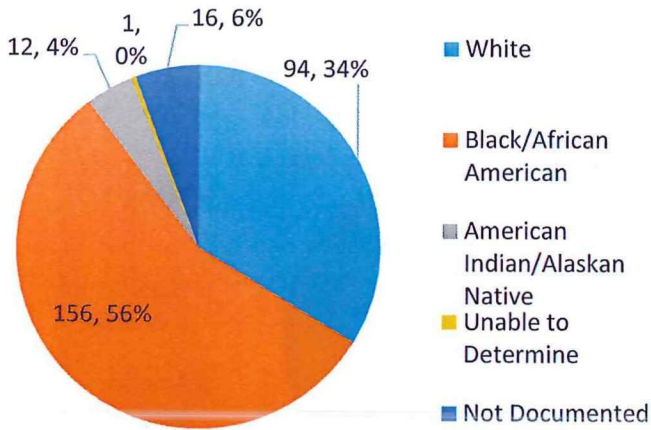
**Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 2 (Milwaukee)**



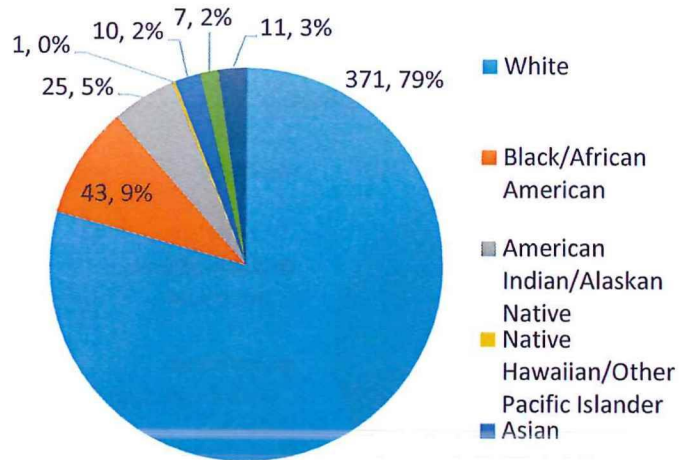
**Race of Public Adoption Adoptive Parent 2 (Balance of State)**



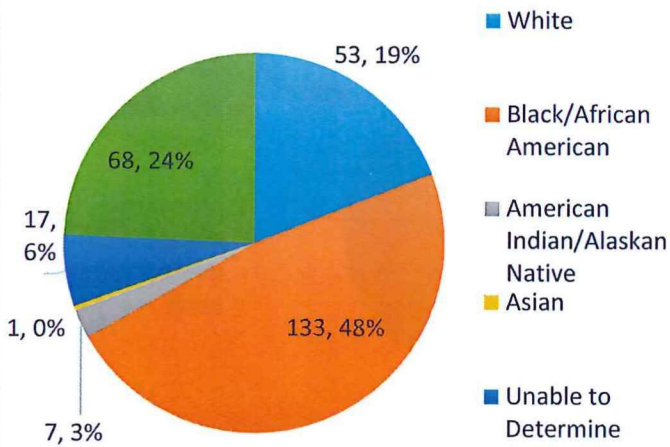
**Race of Public Adoption Birth Mother (Milwaukee)**



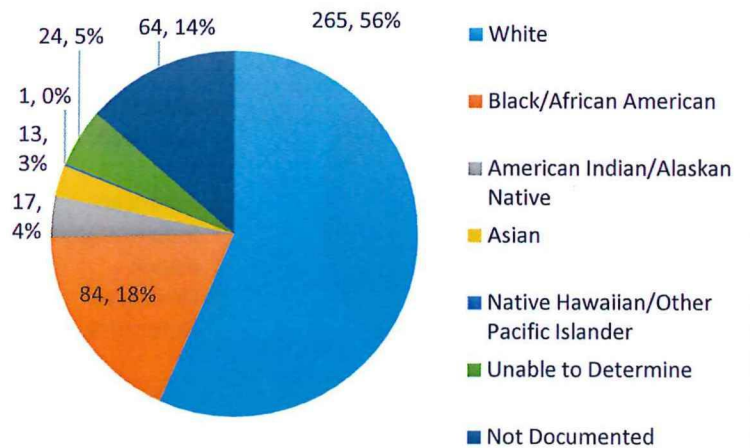
**Race of Public Adoption Birth Mother (Balance of State)**



**Race of Public Adoption Birth Father (Milwaukee)**



**Race of Public Adoption Birth Father (Balance of State)**





**ETHNIC INFORMATION FOR 2018 PUBLIC ADOPTION CHILDREN, ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND BIRTH PARENTS**

Note: A person's race and ethnicity are self-identified; in the case of young children, parents specify the race and ethnicity of the child. People of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race. Total numbers for children and parents differ due to sibling groups, whether there is a second adoptive parent, and whether birth mothers/fathers are identified.

**Hispanic Child**

	Statewide	Balance of State	Milwaukee
Yes	78	49	29
No	653	413	240
Unknown	16	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>279</b>

*Of the 747 children adopted through public adoption in 2018, 78 children (10.4 percent) were identified as Hispanic, 653 children (87.4 percent) were identified as not Hispanic, and for 16 children (2.1 percent) the ethnicity was unknown or not documented.*

**Hispanic Adoptive Parent 1**

	Statewide	Balance of State	Milwaukee
Yes	18	5	13
No	514	337	177
Unknown	17	8	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>199</b>

*Of the 549 "adoptive parents 1" in a public adoption in 2018, 18 parents (3.3 percent) were identified as Hispanic, 514 parents (93.6 percent) were identified as not Hispanic, and for 17 parents (3.1 percent) the ethnicity was unknown or not documented.*

### Hispanic Adoptive Parent 2

	Statewide	Balance of State	Milwaukee
Yes	14	5	9
No	406	283	123
Unknown	12	6	6
No Parent 2	117	56	61
Total	549	350	199

*Of the public adoption in 2018, 14 had a second adoptive parent (2.6 percent) identified as Hispanic, 406 had a second adoptive parents (74.0 percent) identified as not Hispanic, 12 had a second adoptive parent (2.2 percent) whose ethnicity was unknown or not documented, and 117 (21.3 percent) had no second adoptive parent.*

### Hispanic Birth Mother

	Statewide	Balance of State	Milwaukee
Yes	41	22	19
No	603	396	207
Unknown	103	50	53
Total	747	468	279

*Of the 747 birth mothers in a public adoption in 2018, 41 mothers (5.5 percent) were identified as Hispanic, 603 mothers (80.7 percent) were identified as not Hispanic, and for 103 mothers (13.8 percent) the ethnicity was unknown or not documented.*

### Hispanic Birth Father

	Statewide	Balance of State	Milwaukee
Yes	55	36	19
No	463	322	141
Unknown	229	110	119
Total	747	468	279

*Of the 747 birth fathers in a public adoption in 2018, 55 fathers (7.3 percent) were identified as Hispanic, 463 fathers (62.0 percent) were identified as not Hispanic, and for 229 fathers (30.7 percent) the ethnicity was unknown or not documented.*

**ANNUAL NUMBER OF YOUTH IN WISCONSIN AGING OUT OF CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: 2009-2018**

