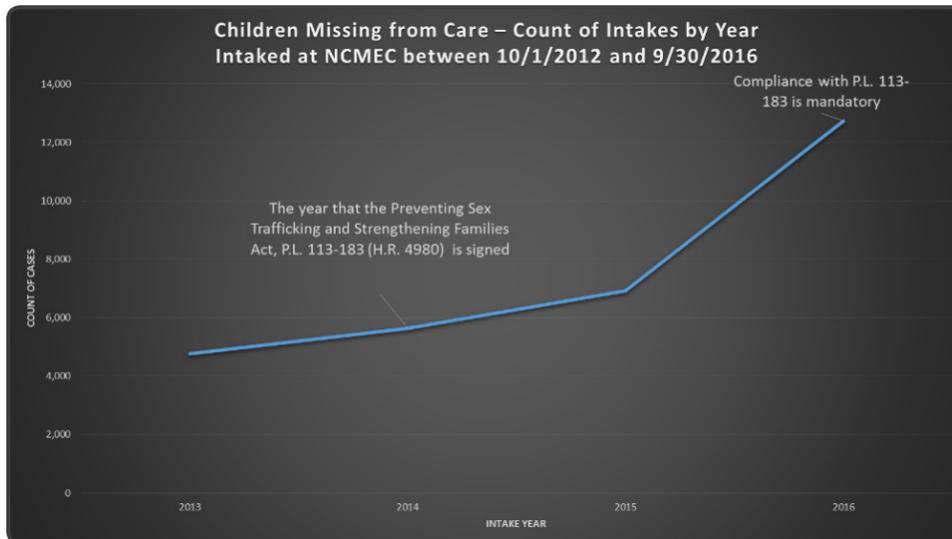


# CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE AT A GLANCE

**Focus** Analysis of data regarding children reported missing to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2016 who went missing while in state care. In total, there were **30,051 children** from this time period who went missing from care. This correlated to a 167 percent increase for all children missing from care<sup>1</sup> over the 4 year time span.

**Change in Law Necessitates Analysis** Signed into law on September 29, 2014 as Pub. L. 113-183, the **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act** (H.R. 4980) requires that State social service agencies report any child under their care who goes missing or is abducted to law enforcement and to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. States were given two years to comply.

This chart shows the aforementioned dramatic increase in cases reported to NCMEC after the Act's passage.



**What We Have Learned** Out of all children missing from care, **94 percent** were **Endangered Runaways** during each of the studied years. Family Abductions were the second-most common case type for children missing from care. The most common way children missing from care were recovered was by **turning themselves in (39%)**, closely followed by **police investigations, which led to 35 percent** of recoveries.

**94 percent of children missing from care were recovered**

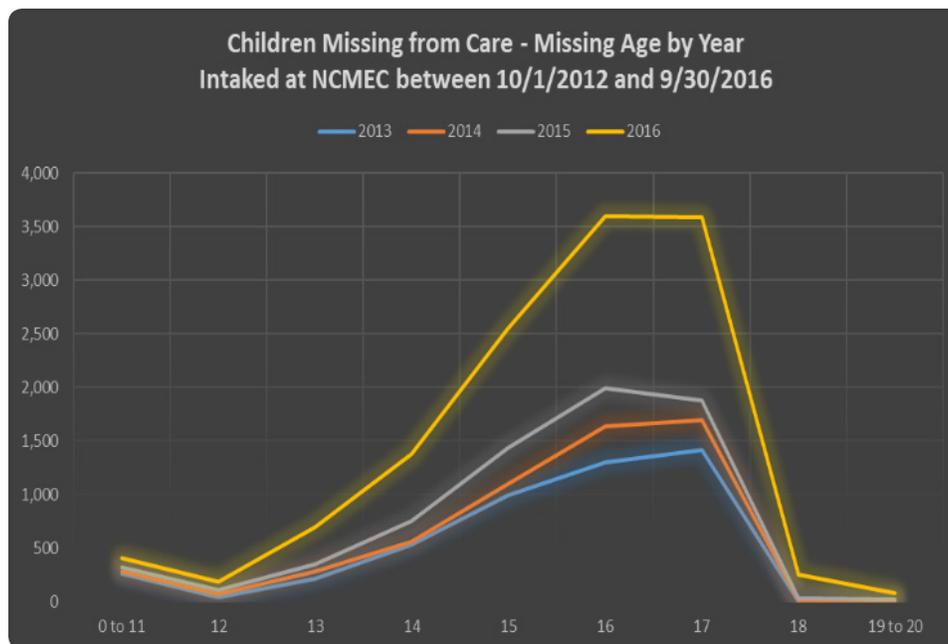
<sup>1</sup> "Children missing from care" encompasses children who were under the legal guardianship of a state social services agency. These children may have been residing in a family placement, foster home, group home, or treatment facility at the time they went missing.

**Almost 90 percent** of all children reported missing from care were recovered in the same state in which they were reported missing.

For all studied years combined, **62 percent** of all children missing from care were **females**. By comparison, 52 percent of all children in foster care on September 30, 2015 were males, while 48 percent were female.<sup>2</sup>

In general, **Black children (42%)** went missing from care more often than any other racial group. However, there were more White children (43%) in foster care in fiscal year 2015 than children of any other race.

Children missing from care overwhelmingly fell within the age range of 12 to 18. **For all children missing from care, 15 was the mean age for both genders.** There was **no significant difference<sup>3</sup>** in mean age between males and females. Though, higher proportions of children in foster care in fiscal year 2015 tended to be younger with 8 being the mean age.



**How Many Times Do They Go Missing?** This analysis also studied children who went missing from care on at least 2 occasions. Over 5,000 children had at least 2 reported incidents during the studied time period. Thirty-two percent of children missing from care had at least 2 reported incidents.

**3 = Average number of missing incidents per child**

Females (over 50%) and black children (ranging from 36% to 48%) were most commonly represented for children missing from care with multiple missing incidents for all 4 individual years. This trend is similar to all children missing from care during the studied time period. **For all children missing from care with multiple missing incidents, 16 was the mean age for both genders.** This means that children missing from care with multiple missing incidents skew slightly older than all children who were missing from care.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>, accessed March 7, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical significance measures whether the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is due to chance or whether there is a relationship between the variables. If a relationship is described as significant, that means one can feel more confident that the relationship is genuine. Significance does not mean that there is a large effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Sometimes, the relationship between variables will be small but significant, or the relationship can be large but insignificant.

**How Long Are They Missing?** From 2013 to 2015, approximately one-third of children missing from care were recovered within the first week. In 2016, almost half of children missing from care were recovered within the first week. For each subsequent day, the recovery numbers decreased over the course of a week.

Overall, children missing from care who had multiple missing incidents were recovered in shorter time frames than all children missing from care. Gender had a significant effect on missing duration for both of these groups. Females had a mean missing duration that was a week longer than males. The presence of an endangerment slightly increased the mean missing duration for both genders.

As of October 10, 2016, 6 percent of all children reported missing from care between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2016 remained actively missing.

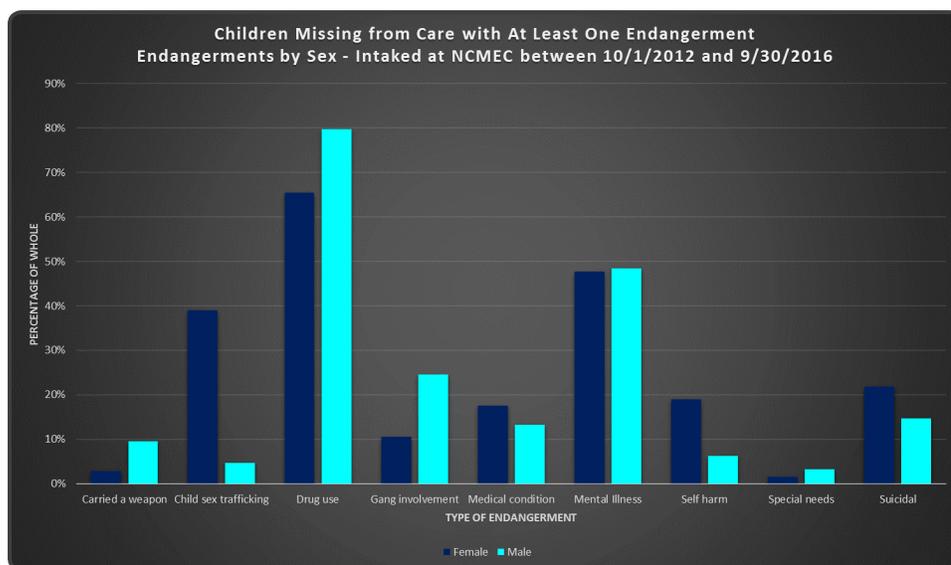
	MEAN MISSING DURATION	FEMALE	MALE	MEAN DIFFERENCE
<b>All Children Missing from Care</b>	Overall Children	43 days	37 days	6 days
	Children With Endangerments	44 days	39 days	5 days
	Children Without Endangerments	41 days	34 days	7 days
<b>Children Missing from Care With Multiple Missing Incidents</b>	Overall Children	36 days	29 days	7 days
	Children With Endangerments	38 days	31 days	7 days
	Children Without Endangerments	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Children Missing from Care are at Risk** Ten endangerments, such as carrying a weapon, use of alcohol/drugs, possible gang involvement, mental illness, pregnancy, self-harm tendencies, suicidal tendencies, special needs, having a medical condition, and involvement in child sex trafficking were analyzed.

**Use of alcohol/drugs (71%) was the most commonly reported endangerment.** Mental illness (48%) was the second most common, followed by likely victimization through child sex trafficking (29%), having a medical condition (16%), gang involvement (15%), and self-harm (15%).

**Sixty-Seven percent** of children missing from care had **at least 1 reported endangerment and just over 40 percent had 1 or 2** of the endangerments listed. No child had all 10 and over **30 percent of all children reported missing from care had none** of the 10 endangerments. Gender had a significant effect on the likelihood of children missing from care having one or more endangerments. 70 percent of females had at least one endangerment, while 63 percent of males had at least one endangerment. **Females had a mean number of 2 endangerments while males had a mean number of 1 endangerment, and the effect of gender on number of endangerments was significant.** If children were missing from care multiple times, they were more likely to have at least 1 endangerment.

**Gender had an effect on the majority of endangerments that were examined in this sample.** Some endangerments were more common for females and some were more common for males. This difference was always significant but not always large.



**Carrying a Weapon** Generally, males (60%) possibly carried weapons more often than females. This difference was statistically significant. Guns and knives were the most common weapon listed, with both females and males reportedly carrying each.

**Males carried guns at a higher rate than females, regardless of age**

**Drugs and Alcohol** From 2013 to 2016, the percentages for all reported alcohol and drug use listed increased over time. Overall, half of all children missing from care and believed to be using alcohol or drugs used marijuana/K2/spice. Alcohol was the next most frequent substance used by children missing from care. **Drug use was disproportionately more common in males, and this difference was significant.** The majority of children who used multiple drugs used only 2 of the drugs previously listed.

**In 2016, 75 percent of children missing from care who used drugs were believed to be using marijuana/k2/spice**

**Mental Illness** In general, **depression** was the most commonly reported form of mental illness among children missing from care, followed by bipolar disorder, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in 2015 and 2016. **There was no significant difference between males and females with this endangerment.**

**Child Sex Trafficking** Of children missing from care, **black children were disproportionately represented** among those being victimized through child sex trafficking. **14 through 17** was the most common age range for this group.

**Recovery times were slightly** longer for children who were likely victims of sex trafficking. **Child sex trafficking was significantly more common in females.**

**Deceased Children** In total, **12 children who went missing while in care were recovered deceased.** Eleven of these children had formally listed endangerments. Furthermore, the majority of these children demonstrated more than one endangerment, the most common being that the child had run away in the past. There was no major difference by gender among children recovered deceased.

**The majority of children missing from care recovered deceased were Endangered Runaways**