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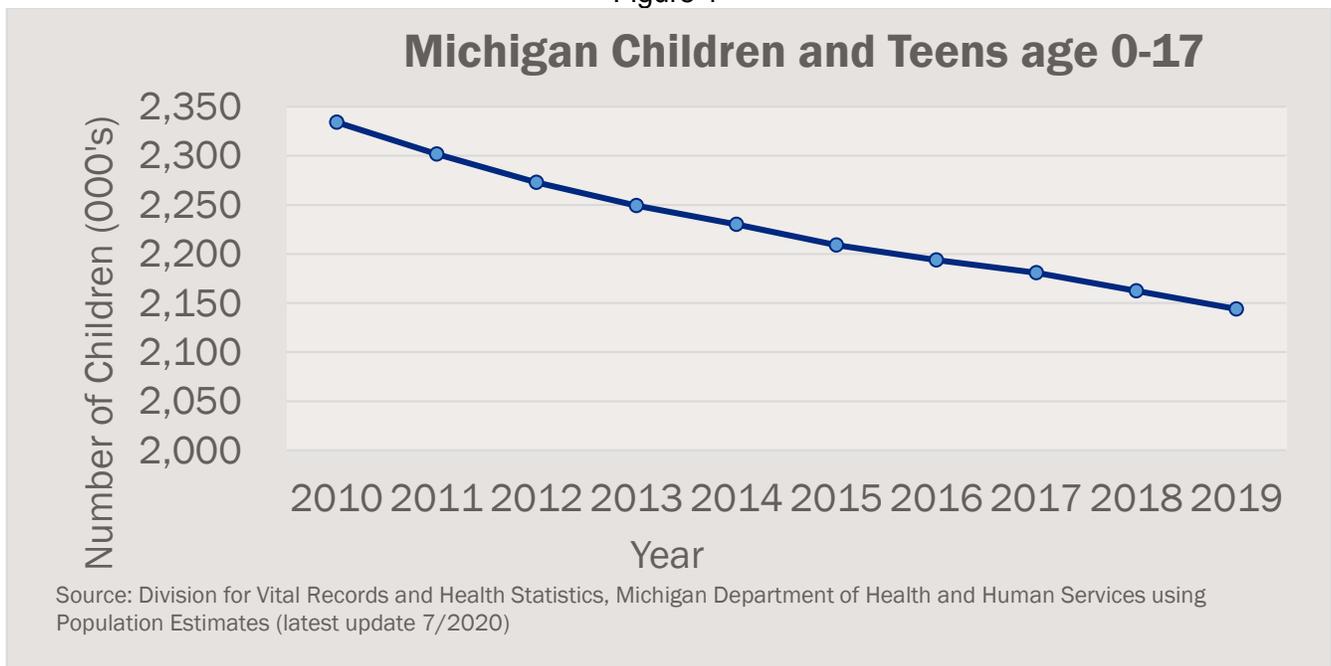
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Population Dynamics and Foster Care

Humphrey Akujobi, Fiscal Analyst

The demographics of the State in terms of age structure have been slowly changing over the last decade as the State is following a national trend of declining fertility and birthrates. There are fewer children being born in the State and the population of children is decreasing, which could have an impact on the State's social programs, particularly foster care. In 2010, the total number of children in the State was 2,334,175, which represented 23.6% of the total population. These figures have declined to 2,143,933, or 21.6% of the total population as of 2019, as illustrated in the [Figure 1](#) below.¹

Figure 1

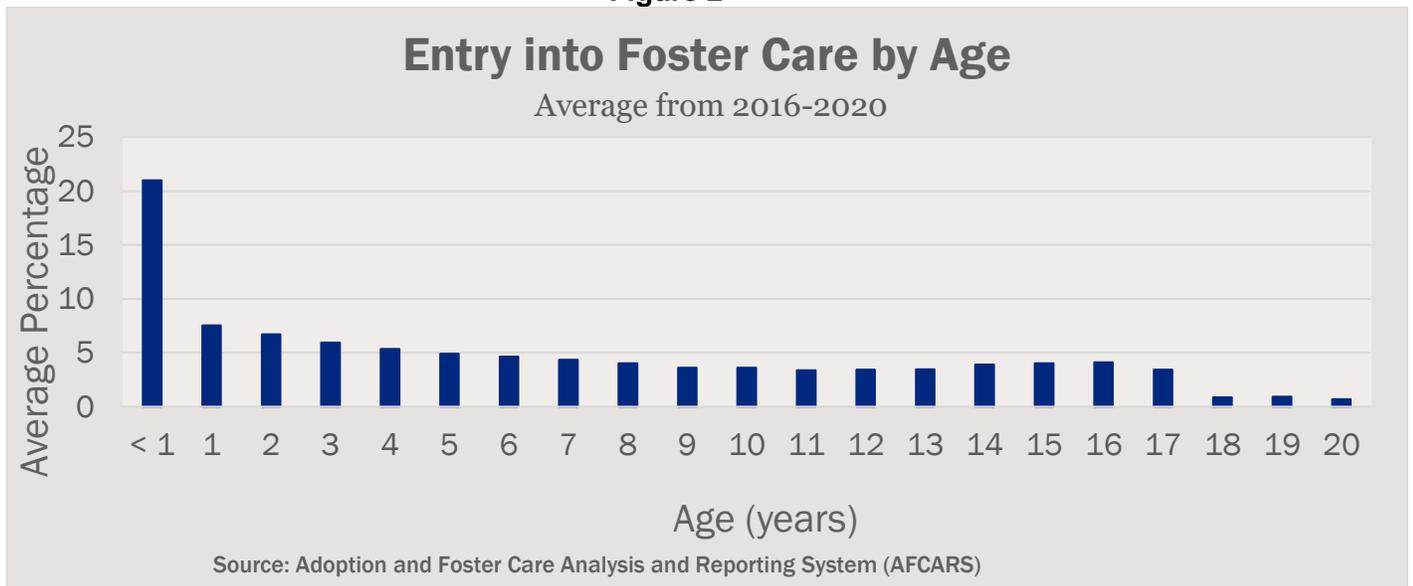


A smaller overall pool of children means a smaller group of potential foster children. As shown in [Figure 2](#), the largest age cohorts of children in foster care are children under one year old, children one year old, and children two years old, with one-year-old children representing the largest group.² The three youngest age cohorts entered foster care at the highest rate over the five-year period from 2016 through 2020. This means that if the impact of the shrinking population of children in the State does lead to a decline in the foster care population, the impact should be reflected rather quickly.

¹ Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services using Population Estimates (latest update 7/2020) released by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services

² Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Figure 2



A smaller pool of children does not guarantee that there will be fewer children entering foster care if the determinants of fertility decline in the State overlap with the determinants of the displacement of children. The weight of the competing factors, the population impact versus determinant impacts, will dictate the resulting population change. Additionally, this speaks only to children entering foster care; the foster care population overall is dictated also by the length of stay in foster care before exiting because of adoption, reunification with family, or aging out of the system.

According to AFCARS data from fiscal year (FY) 2016 through FY 2020, the number of children entering foster care has declined every year outside of 2017. In FY 2020 4,386 children entered foster care, which was down from 6,512 in FY 2016. The recent trend of the last five years shows fewer children entering foster care; however, the median length of stay in foster care has fluctuated and saw its peak in FY 2020, as shown in [Figure 3](#). As a result, the overall foster population has not shown a consistent downward trend thus far. The continued fertility decline and declining population of children is something to consider when thinking of the future of foster care in the State.

Figure 3

