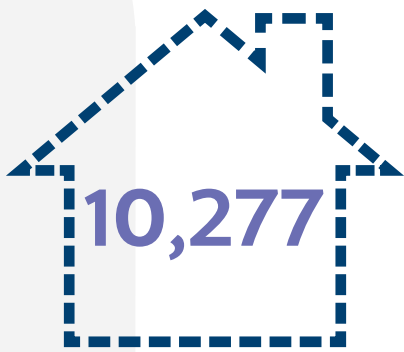


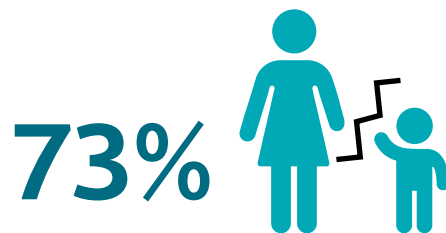
Inequities in the child welfare system

Children have the **right to protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation**. They also have the right to remain with their families whenever possible; separating children from their families should only ever be a last resort.

Worsening issues like unaffordable housing, poverty and the toxic drug crisis increase risks to children.



children and youth were in out-of-home care in B.C. as of Mar. 31, 2024.



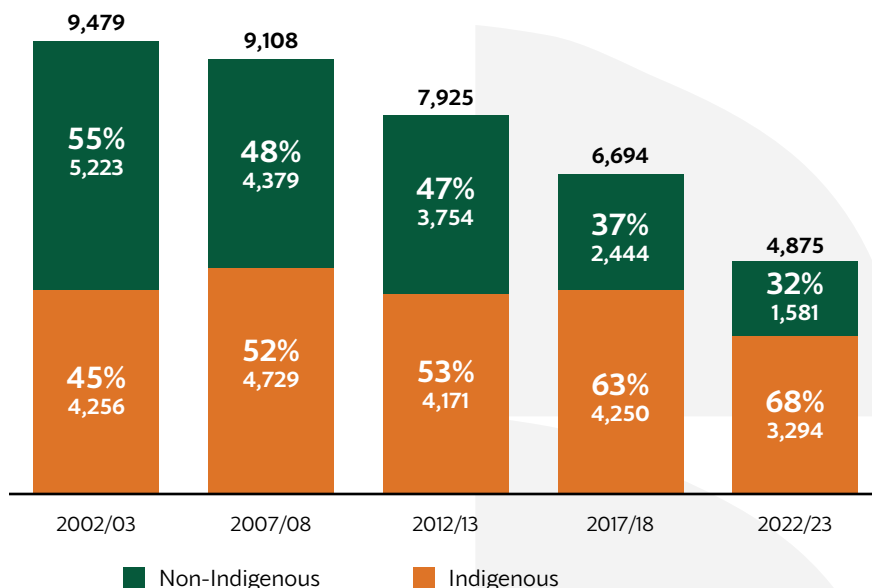
of child welfare cases cite neglect as a reason for family separation — but lack of housing, poverty and mental health barriers are often mistaken for neglect.



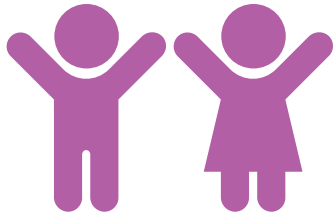
Many children in government care experience abuse, disconnection from family and culture and inadequate support.

Impact on marginalized groups

Number of children and youth in care in B.C., 2002/03–2022/23



Due to the long-term impacts of colonization, Indigenous families are more likely to experience poverty, gender-based violence, disability, substance use, history in care, incarceration and sex work. All of these factors increase the chance of involvement with the child welfare system.



Although Indigenous children and youth make up only **10% of the population** of children and youth in B.C., they account for **68% of those in care**.

Stigma and fear prevent parents — especially Indigenous and racialized mothers — from seeking support, fearing their children will be taken away.



Parents and children with **disabilities are also overrepresented** in the child welfare system. In some cases, when parents indicate they need assistance, this need is used against them by decision makers as evidence that they are not capable caregivers.

For many families of children with disabilities, the first challenge in receiving services is having their child diagnosed. There are **long wait times** to get assessments and diagnoses for children. This can delay access to supports.



About BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in the province. Learn more about our Office at bchumanrights.ca

10 key systems impacting human rights in B.C.

This fact sheet is based on the Commissioner's 2024 report, *Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.*, which highlights significant inequities and injustices affecting B.C. residents across 10 key systems. These include inequities in housing, the social safety net, health care, education, employment, child welfare, criminal justice, public spaces and the family sphere, as well as in the effects of the environmental crisis. Exploring these systems is an important way to determine the state of human rights in British Columbia.



baseline.bchumanrights.ca/in-focus