

REPORT TO CONGRESS



Since its initial pilot in 2013, Florida's Keys to Independence program has helped over 1,000 teens and young adults navigate the permit, training, license and insurance requirements necessary to get a driver's license. The goal of this pioneering program is two-fold: to remove barriers that limit youth in foster care from having the same experiences as other teenagers; and to provide resources that support their long term success.

The Keys to Independence model is now expanding to offer technical assistance to other states interested in developing

similar initiatives. A recent third-party analysis of Keys to Independence program data highlights the benefit of having a driver's license on education and job outcomes. The findings support Florida's continued investment in providing access for youth in foster care to earn a driver's license:



When compared to their counterparts who may not have permit or license, youth in foster care with a learner's permit or driver's license are:



More likely to have received their high school diploma/GED or higher.



More likely to be employed (full or part time)

While it is difficult to be fully independent without a driver's license, there are many barriers for youth in foster care to learn to drive and to obtain his or her license. These results suggest that an investment in removing these barriers provides the keys to independence that young adults need to succeed.

A complete summary of methodology and results follows.

For more information, go to www.keystoindependencefl.com, or email info@keystoindependencefl.org.

Impact Report: Keys to Independence

Driving Success for Youth in Foster Care

Embrace Families offers a program called Keys to Independence®, a Florida initiative designed to assist eligible youth and young adults earn a driver's license by eliminating barriers that prevent them from driving. This program began as a pilot in 2013 and, after three years of noteworthy success, it became a permanent program managed statewide by Embrace Families. Since establishment, the program's population has been expanded to not only serve those in licensed care, but also those placed in relative and non-relative care, those in extended foster care, and, most recently, young adults in Post Education Support Services (PESS).



For qualified youth, the program pays or reimburses all costs associated with the driver's license process, including auto insurance.

With the success of Keys to Independence (K2I), Embrace Families now has contracted with ICF, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, to offer technical assistance to states interested in developing a driving program or expanding on existing services to address the barriers to obtaining licensure for foster youth in their state.

Overview

As the model established by this program expands to communities nationwide, research continues to affirm that, for young adults, there is a relationship between having a driver's license or learner's permit and having successful outcomes. Indeed, third-party analysis demonstrates that same relationship exists for participating youth.

Data provided by Embrace Families was used to examine differences in experiences among young people in the foster care system with a driver's license or learner's permit compared to young people who may not have either. The Embrace Families data on having a driver's license was linked to employment and education data in the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)¹ and the Florida state child welfare data system².

In partnership with Embrace Families, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Initiative Youth Opportunities Initiative funded Child Trends, a non-profit research organization with a focus on children and families, to conduct analysis of Embrace Families' data. Three (3) primary research questions were identified for exploration. A summary of each question and the associated results appear in the Results section below.

Key Findings

Results indicate that Florida's investment in providing access for youth in foster care to earn a driver's license has allowed for positive education and job outcomes for these youth.

Most notably, youth in foster care with a learner's permit or driver's license are **more likely to have received their high school diploma** (see Q1) and **more likely to be employed** (see Q2) than their counterparts who may not have a permit or license.

¹ NYTD cohort 3 wave 3 (age 21 in FY2021)

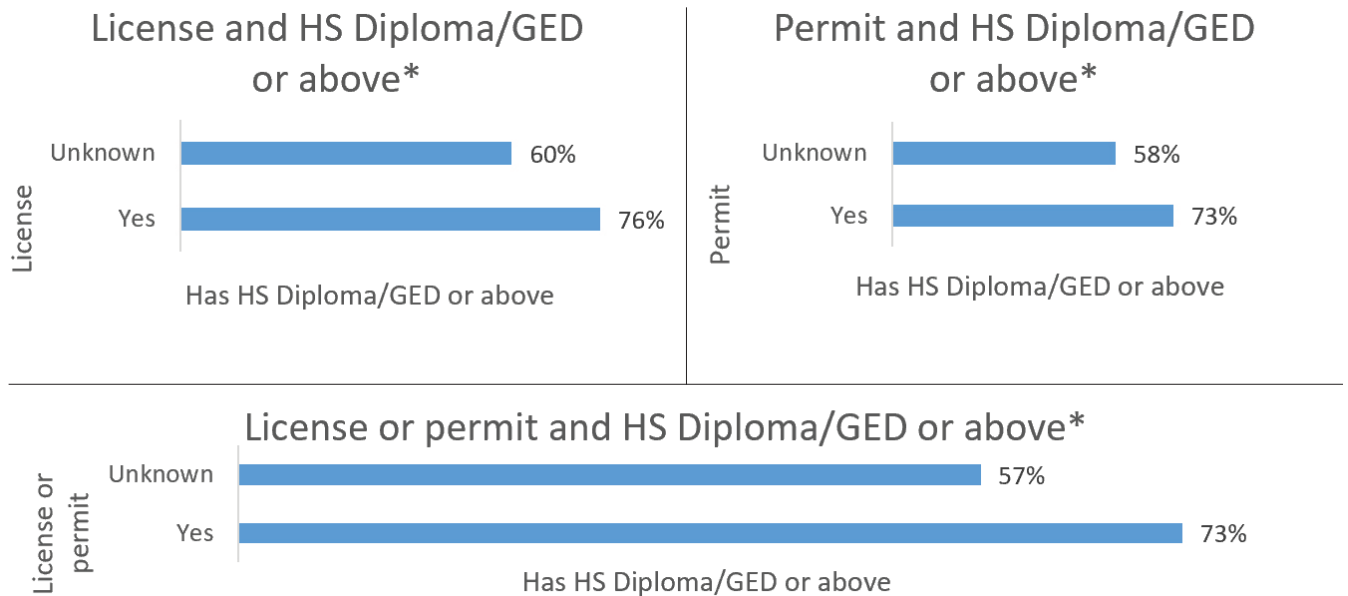
² This data is not publicly available and was provided directly by the state through an agreement with Embrace Families.

Results

Three primary questions were identified to determine differentials, if any, between youth in the foster care system who had a driver's permit or license and youth in the foster care system who may not have either. It is important to note that the data was designed to distinguish youth who are known to possess a license or permit (i.e., a known yes) from the comparison group of youth whose license or permit possession status is not a known yes (i.e., a known no, unknown but would be yes if known, or unknown but would be no if known). A summary of each question, and the results associated with that question, appear below. Statistically significant³ findings are denoted with an asterisk (*).

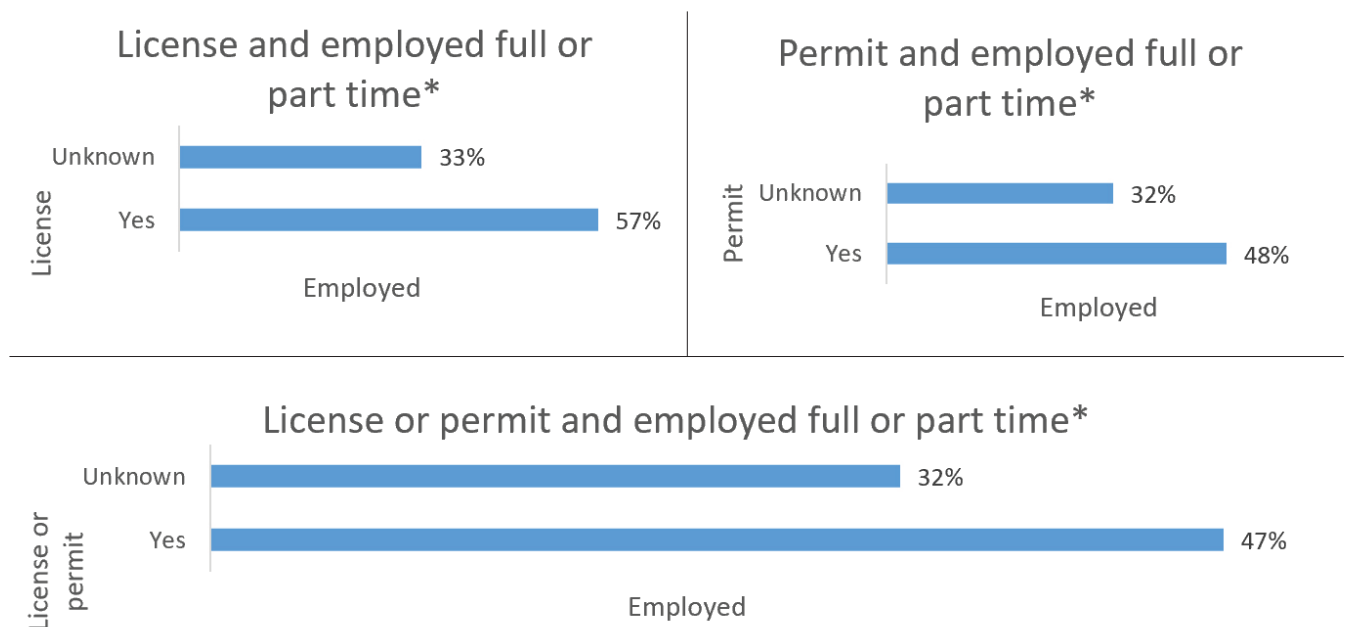
Q1: What is the relationship between driver's license possession and having a high school diploma/GED or higher?

Among young people ages 19 and older, young people with a license or permit were more likely to have a GED/high school diploma or higher compared to those who may have neither a license nor permit.



Q2: What is the relationship between driver's license possession and having a part- or full-time job?

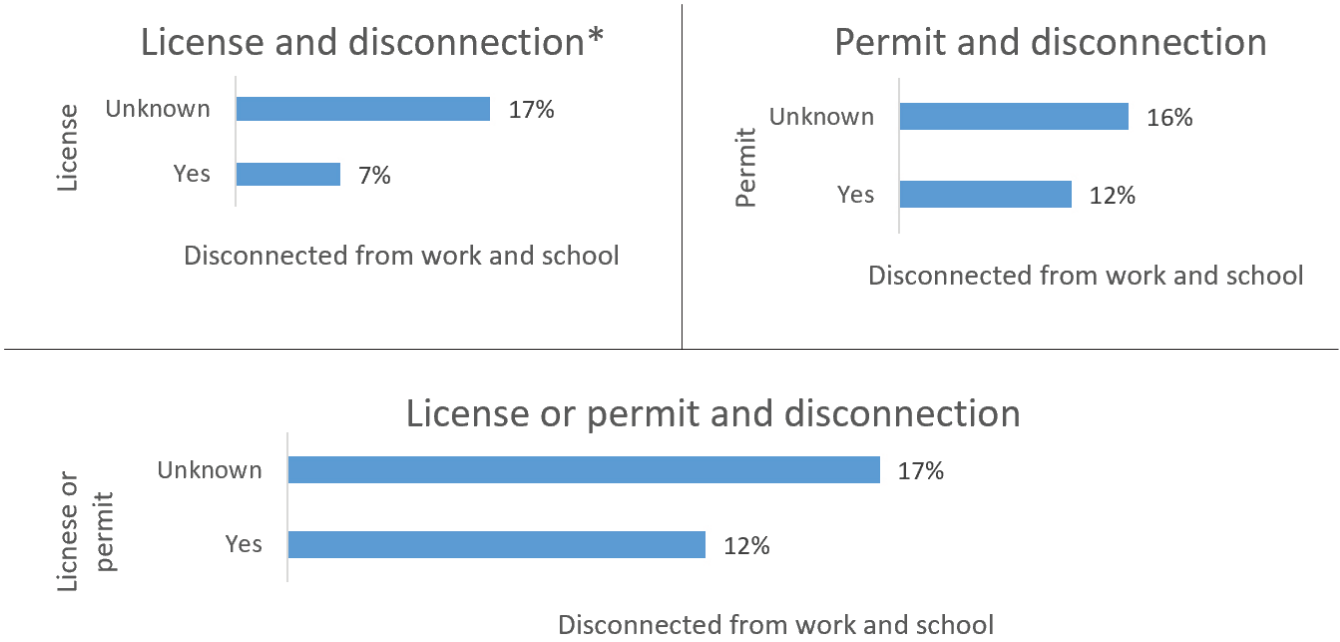
Young people with a license or permit were more likely to be employed (full or part time) than young people who may have neither a permit nor license.



³ Statistically significant means the connections in the findings are very likely to be real and very unlikely to just happen by chance.

Q3: What is the relationship between driver's license possession and disconnection from work and school?

Young people with a driver's license were less likely to be disconnected from work and school than young people who may not have a driver's license. However, the results for young people with a learner's permit, or with either a permit or license, were not statistically significant.



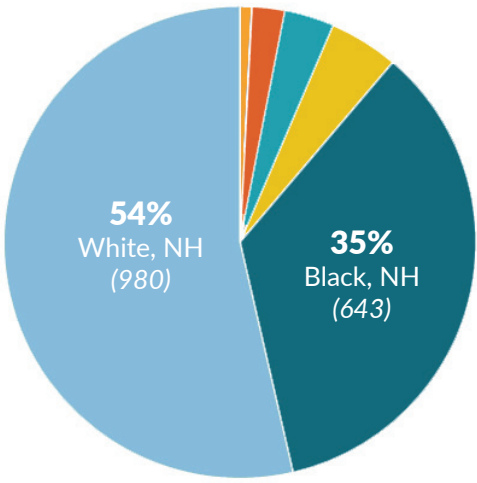
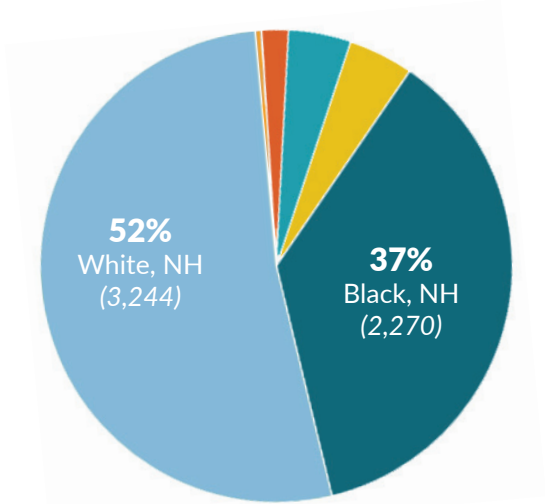
Demographics

Demographic breakdown of race and age of those included in the dataset is as follows:

Race/ethnicity

Overall, 6,196 young people were included in the dataset:

1,828 of those in the dataset had either a driver's license or learner's permit:

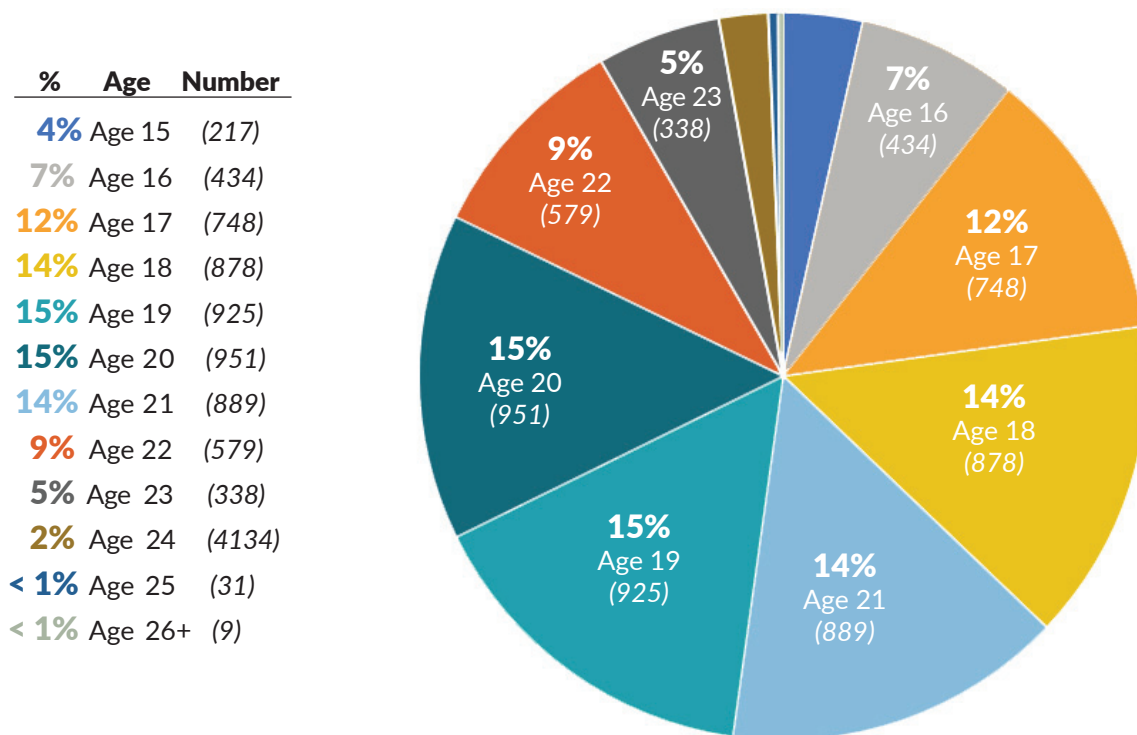


%	Race/ethnicity	Number
< 1%	Asian, HN	(27)
2%	Unknown/Other, NH	(114)
4%	Hispanic	(264)
4%	Multi-racial	(277)
37%	Black, HN	(2,270)
52%	White, HN	(3,244)

%	Race/ethnicity	Number
< 1%	Asian, HN	(15)
2%	Unknown/Other, NH	(41)
3%	Hispanic	(62)
5%	Multi-racial	(87)
35%	Black, HN	(643)
54%	White, HN	(980)

Age⁴

The majority of young people in the dataset were between the ages of 17 and 21.



⁴ Data on current age was not available for 63 young people in the dataset.

About Embrace Families

Embrace Families, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, helps Central Florida families overcome the root causes of abuse and neglect through programs that offer case management and other prevention services. When a child can't remain safely in their home, Embrace Families supports them through foster care, adoption, mentoring and beyond. For more information, visit www.embracefamilies.org, "like" Embrace Families" on Facebook or follow it on Twitter and Instagram.