The overrepresentation of Black youth placed in the child welfare system has been reported for over four decades in Western societies. Studies have shown that racial disparities in child protection services have major impacts on families and youth from Black communities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, among others.

This study explored the reasons for this overrepresentation in countries where Black populations are a minority (e.g., USA, Canada, UK, etc.).

We identified all published articles addressing the reasons for the overrepresentation of Black youth in child welfare services in countries where Black populations are a minority.

In total, we found 37 articles on the topic, which we read in depth individually to meet the following objectives:

(1) to confirm or refute the overrepresentation of Black youth placed in child welfare systems in Western societies;

(2) to analyze the factors that protect Black youth or that put them at risk of involvement with child welfare.

WHAT WE FOUND

Over 87% of the articles found confirmed that Black youth were overrepresented in child welfare services at various levels.
Factors that Put Black Youth at Risk for Involvement with Child Welfare

**Race:**
- Compared to White youth, Black youth were more likely to be overrepresented in child welfare systems and were more likely to be involved at different stages of contact with child welfare.

**Low socioeconomic status:**
- Black youth with lower socioeconomic status were more likely than White youth living in similar circumstances to be involved at different stages of child welfare services.

**Living conditions:**
- Black, Latino, and White youth living in racially diverse neighbourhoods are at an increased risk of being reported compared to youth living in neighbourhoods with less racial diversity.

**Racial biases:**
- Black youth, compared to White youth, were more likely to be reported to child welfare by professionals, law enforcement agencies, and medical agencies. Caseworkers’ racial biases can also play a role in their decision-making concerning the pathways of youth in child welfare (e.g., placement in long-term care, out of kin care etc.)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Social workers must be trained on issues related to racial biases, discrimination, and racial disparities in child welfare, as well as anti-oppressive and antiracist strategies and practices.

- Child welfare systems should encourage the development of trainings in educational practices for parents as a preventative tool in community settings for parents and parents-to-be, and as a method of intervention with families facing crises or problems of neglect and violence.

- Child welfare workers must consider the barriers Black families can face such as poverty, racial discrimination and bias, lack of access to health services, especially mental health services, and access to education.

- Need for funding targeted research to better understand the processes related to racial disparities and the overrepresentation of Black youth in child welfare services (e.g., factors that protect Black youth or that put them at risk of involvement with child welfare).
The Vulnerability, Trauma, Resilience and Culture Research Laboratory (V-TRaC) directed by Dr. Jude Mary Cénat is pursuing a research program in youth and adults. The V-TRaC lab has three main research axes: (1) Vulnerability and trauma, (2) Racial disparities in health and social services, (3) and Global mental health. Their research aims to develop culturally appropriate assessment, prevention, and intervention tools that meet the real needs of individuals and communities.

This fact sheet is based on:
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105714

To cite this fact sheet:

This project is funded by:

[SSHRC CRSH](https://wwwSSHRC.CRSH)
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada