

# VALID NEGLECT ALLEGATIONS

**DEFINITION:** Total number of valid neglect allegations in State Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007), disaggregated by race. Percentages reflect the percentage of allegations that involved children of a given race.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Neglect is the most common type of child maltreatment, accounting for three out of every four valid abuse and neglect allegations in Louisiana. Nationally, 41% of child maltreatment fatalities in 2006 were due to child neglect alone—more than any other single cause, including physical abuse.<sup>1</sup> Neglect is defined in Louisiana as the “unreasonable refusal or failure of a parent or caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment, or counseling for injury, illness, or condition of the child, as a result of which the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health and safety is substantially threatened or impaired.”<sup>2</sup> Child neglect also encompasses prenatal neglect, which is the “unlawful use by a mother during pregnancy of a controlled dangerous substance that results in symptoms of withdrawal in the infant or the presence of a controlled substance in the infant’s body.”<sup>3</sup> Louisiana is one of 11 states in which a parent or caregiver’s financial inability to provide for a child is exempted from the definition of neglect.<sup>4</sup>

Louisiana experienced a 32% increase in the number of valid neglect allegations between FY 2005 and FY 2007, even as the state’s child population declined. During this time, the number of valid neglect allegations more than doubled in eight parishes—Livingston, Bossier, East Feliciana, St. Landry, De Soto, Washington, Grant, and Morehouse. By contrast, six parishes saw the number of valid neglect allegations decrease by at least half during this period, including Plaquemines, Tensas, East Carroll, St. Bernard, Orleans, and Lincoln parishes. Most of these declines are attributable to either the decrease in population due to Hurricane Katrina or to a relatively small number of allegations in a parish.

## RACIAL DISPARITIES

In Louisiana, black children were slightly underrepresented in valid neglect allegations in FY 2007. While black children made up about 38% of the child population in 2007, only 36% of valid neglect allegations involved black children. By contrast, white children were overrepresented, making up 55% of the child population, but 60% of valid neglect allegations. However, the level

of overrepresentation and underrepresentation varied widely among parishes. In 15 parishes, the percentage of valid neglect allegations involving black children was roughly proportional to the percentage of black children in the population. In 14 parishes, black children were underrepresented, meaning that a smaller proportion of neglect allegations involved black children than one would expect based on their occurrence in the overall population. In some of these parishes, the level of underrepresentation was substantial. For example, in Lafourche/Assumption, black children make up 24% of the child population, but only 12% of valid neglect allegations involved black children. Black children were overrepresented in 18 parishes, meaning that a higher percentage of valid neglect allegations involved black children than one would expect based on their presence in the child population. The level of overrepresentation in some parishes was particularly high. In Terrebonne Parish, black children make up just 24% of the child population, but 45% of valid child neglect allegations involved black children.

## DATA SOURCE

Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services, by special request.

## DATA NOTE

Note that this measure reflects the number of valid allegations, not the total number of investigations or the number of children involved in investigations. A single child can be the subject of more than one allegation in the course of a single investigation. Additionally, a child can be the subject of more than one investigation each year. Totals from the parishes do not add up to the Louisiana totals because a small number of cases are handled directly by the state office.

## RATE CALCULATION

$100 * (\text{number of valid neglect allegations involving black children} \div \text{total number of valid neglect allegations})$

$100 * (\text{number of valid neglect allegations involving white children} \div \text{total number of valid neglect allegations})$

<sup>1</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, “Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities: Statistics and Interventions,” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau, 2009), 4, retrieved from [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) on 5/1/2009.

<sup>2</sup> Louisiana Department of Social Services, “Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect,” Louisiana Department of Social Services, retrieved from [www.dss.louisiana.gov](http://www.dss.louisiana.gov) on 5/1/2009.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, “Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect” (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau, 2007), 5, retrieved from [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) on 5/1/2009.

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FY 2007

	TOTAL	BLACK		WHITE	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%
<b>LOUISIANA</b>	<b>12,899</b>	<b>4,661</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7,755</b>	<b>60</b>
Acadia	185	32	17	150	81
Allen	116	42	36	73	63
Ascension	148	47	32	101	68
Assumption <i>see Lafourche Parish</i>					
Avoyelles	59	11	19	35	59
Beauregard	120	19	16	99	83
Bienville <i>see Webster Parish</i>					
Bossier	597	219	37	356	60
Caddo	531	322	61	179	34
Calcasieu					
Cameron	1,232	371	30	828	67
Caldwell <i>see Ouachita Parish</i>					
Cameron <i>see Calcasieu Parish</i>					
Catahoula	74	17	23	57	77
La Salle					
Claiborne <i>see Webster Parish</i>					
Concordia	74	25	34	49	66
De Soto	271	85	31	186	69
East Baton Rouge	408	321	79	76	19
East Carroll	31	13	42	17	55
East Feliciana	40	16	40	24	60
West Feliciana					
Evangeline	75	38	51	37	49
Franklin	10	8	80	<5	LNE
Grant	201	62	31	136	68
Iberia	170	82	48	86	51
Iberville	123	64	52	56	46
West Baton Rouge					
Jackson <i>see Webster Parish</i>					
Jefferson	556	223	40	312	56
Jefferson Davis	101	13	13	84	83
Lafayette	413	206	50	199	48
Lafourche					
Assumption	131	16	12	111	85
La Salle <i>see Catahoula Parish</i>					
Lincoln	47	19	40	22	47
Livingston	1,442	125	9	1,218	84
Madison	48	42	88	<5	LNE
Morehouse	183	119	65	62	34
Natchitoches					
Red River	185	116	63	68	37
Orleans	290	252	87	30	10
Ouachita					
Caldwell	622	297	48	314	50
Plaquemines	0	0	n.a.	0	n.a.
Pointe Coupee	48	14	29	30	63
Rapides	407	242	59	146	36
Red River <i>see Natchitoches Parish</i>					
Richland	88	41	47	31	35
Sabine	56	9	16	47	84
St. Bernard	123	8	7	101	82
St. Charles <i>see St. John the Baptist Parish</i>					
St. Helena <i>see Tangipahoa Parish</i>					
St. James <i>see St. John the Baptist Parish</i>					
St. John the Baptist					
St. Charles	145	93	64	45	31
St. James					
St. Landry	338	134	40	194	57
St. Martin	82	33	40	47	57
St. Mary	158	53	34	98	62
St. Tammany	962	192	20	726	75
Tangipahoa					
St. Helena	363	145	40	208	57
Tensas	0	0	n.a.	0	n.a.
Terrebonne	96	43	45	39	41
Union	57	36	63	21	37
Vermilion	322	56	17	258	80
Vernon	390	79	20	282	72
Washington	445	120	27	318	71
Webster					
Bienville					
Claiborne	270	104	39	162	60
Jackson					
West Baton Rouge <i>see Iberville Parish</i>					
West Carroll	0	0	n.a.	0	n.a.
West Feliciana <i>see East Feliciana Parish</i>					
Winn	66	37	56	29	44

\* LNE Percentages were not calculated for any number less than five.