



TAY-Hub

Transition-Age Youth
Research & Evaluation Hub

DOCUMENTING OUT-OF-COUNTY RESIDENCES

for Young Adults in Foster Care



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Funding Declaration and Acknowledgements

The Transition–Age Youth Research & Evaluation Hub (TAY–Hub) seeks to improve policies and practices affecting TAY by monitoring outcomes and through applied research that is grounded in engagement with members of the child welfare services community, including those with lived experience of foster care. The authors would like to thank partners at the California Department of Social Services for the commitment to building evidence to inform policies and programs. The TAY–Hub is grateful for the generosity and interest of our funders: the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Tipping Point Community, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and California College Pathways Funders Alliance.

Disclaimer

This study was performed with the permission of the California Department of Social Services; however, the opinions and conclusions are solely those of the authors and do not represent the opinions of the department.

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Purpose

While most states administer child welfare services centrally, a few, like California, opt for county-administered programs. The county-administered structure of child welfare services allows for a more localized approach to addressing each community's unique needs. This can lead to more relevant service provision than a centralized, state-administered system. At the same time, a decentralized approach introduces complexities that are not encountered by state-run programs.

These dynamics are particularly important for young adults in foster care. Nearly every state in the US has adopted some form of the Federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008, which allows young adults who are in foster care on their 18th birthday to remain in extended foster care until age 21 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2022). Policies, practices, and service availability vary widely across the nation. In California, young adults in foster care can relocate to another county due to work, educational opportunities, or personal choice as they gain autonomy as adults (California Department of Social Services, n.d.). This dynamic creates complexities in service delivery, as it involves coordination between the responsible county and the county where the youth currently reside.

The delivery of services in California can be a challenge given it is a large state comprising 58 counties with different constellations of economic, educational, and residential opportunities for young people exiting foster care. Research has demonstrated a relationship among county

factors, the implementation of extended foster care, and young people's outcomes (Courtney et al., 2023; Park et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding where young people come from and where they choose to live while receiving extended foster care services can provide insights into policy development and resource allocation.

This study aims to explore the frequency of out-of-county (including out-of-state; OOC) residences among young adults in foster care and identify counties and states with high rates of emigration (i.e., outmigration) and immigration. Understanding the frequency and dynamics of OOC residences can inform efforts to coordinate services between and among counties to ensure young adults do not experience interruptions in care or variations in county-to-county service implementation.





Method

The current study used population-level data sourced from the California Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). The population comprised young people ages 18 and older in child welfare-supervised foster care on January 1 between 2018 and 2022. We included all young people who had been in care for at least 8 days. OOC residence rates were calculated for youth who were in care on or after their 18th birthday, resulting in a total sample of 16,467 young people. Among them, 14,813 young people had never experienced an out-of-state placement, while 1,654 youth had at least one out-of-state placement.

We present two measures of OOC residence. The first is the cumulative measure, which calculates the proportion of young people who have had at least one OOC residence during their time in extended foster care. This proportion was calculated for young people who experienced in- and out-of-state OOC residences. The second is a point-in-time estimate, which reflects the proportion of young people in care on a given day living in an OOC (including out-of-state) residence. For the purposes of this report, point-in-time rates were measured on January 1 for the five years spanning between 2018 to 2022. This was also calculated for young people who experienced in- and out-of-state OOC residences. We also calculated the cumulative rate of OOC residences as a minor, which measures whether young people experienced an OOC residence while in foster care as a minor. Given

California has 58 separate counties, we created choropleths (heat maps) to visualize the proportion of young people moving to and from different counties and states.

We also measured various demographic characteristics to test for differences between young people with and without OOC residences. These include sex assigned at birth, race and ethnicity, age at first entry, diagnosis with any physical, mental, or developmental disability, time spent in foster care as a minor, time spent in extended foster care, predominant residence type while in extended foster care, residential mobility, and county urbanicity. Residential mobility, defined as the number of moves during young people's time in extended foster care, was measured as a dichotomous variable indicating high (2+ moves per year in care) or low (less than 2 moves per year in care) residential mobility.¹ Chi-square tests were used to test for significant differences between young people with and without OOC residences. Given our large sample size, we set our criteria for statistical significance at $p < .001$ to reduce the chance of type 1 error (false positives) and reported effect size (Cramér's V) to assess statistically significant differences for practical significance. Consistent with data de-identification guidelines requirements implemented by the California Department of Social Services (California Department of Social Services, 2019), cell sizes under 11 are masked to protect the confidentiality of individuals summarized in the data.

1 Our measure of residential mobility was adapted from the U.S. Children's Bureau's (2019) placement stability measure, which defines placement stability as two or fewer placements per placement episode. Considering that young people in extended foster care in California can exit and re-enter care, we adapted this measure to reflect the potential for multiple re-entries in a short period by measuring placement moves per cumulative year in extended foster care (i.e., across all extended foster care placement episodes).



Results

Study sample characteristics are presented in [Table 1](#). We found 37.1% of young people who never left California had at least one OOC residence during their time in extended foster care. When considering youth with out-of-state placements, this rate increased to 43.5% of young people. Among young people residing out-of-county, 44.4% had a documented disability at some point during their time in foster care. Nearly three-quarters of young people in an OOC residence also had an OOC residence as a minor, compared to only 35.3% of young people who remained in their supervising county. The rate of residence mobility among young people in OOC residences was twice that of young people without an OOC residence (7.4% vs. 15.9%). As it pertains to county urbanicity, young people from rural counties were more likely to have an OOC residence than not (7.4% vs. 4.0%). Furthermore, young people from urban counties other than Los Angeles County had relatively high rates of OOC residences, while young people from Los Angeles County showed lower rates of OOC residence.

[Table 2](#) shows the differences between young people with OOC residences in and outside California. While a greater proportion of youth with in-state OOC residences were Latine (44.2%), out-of-state residences were more evenly split by race and ethnicity, with Latine (33.4%), Black (30.8%), and White (31.4%) having similar rates of out-of-state residences. Interestingly, young people who left the state had lower rates of OOC residences as minors than their peers living

in California. A greater proportion of young people residing outside of California were in supervised independent living placements compared to young people in OOC residences within the state. Notably, changes in supervising agencies were low, with only 3.7% of all young people in any OOC residence having a documented change in their supervising county.

[Table 3](#) and [Figure 1](#) show point-in-time percentages and counts of each county's extended foster care caseload living in an OOC residence. Just over one-in-four young people across California lived outside their supervising county, with this proportion increasing slightly over the five-year observation period. Generally, young people in Bay Area counties (Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano) had higher rates of OOC placements. Coastal counties in southern California (San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura) had lower rates of OOC residences, while counties in the Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside) had higher rates. Just over one-third of young people supervised by masked counties (see notes in [Table 3](#) for a comprehensive list of masked counties) lived in an OOC residence.

[Table 4](#) and [Figure 2](#) present the proportion and counts of young people who are not supervised by their county of residence. Bay Area counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Solano) hosted young people from other counties at higher rates. Counties surrounding the Bay Area (Sacramento, Stanislaus,

San Joaquin, and Merced) also hosted more young people. In southern California, OOC young people comprised a small proportion of Los Angeles County's population in extended foster care, while Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura had higher rates of young people from other counties. Approximately one-in-four young people living in masked counties (see Notes in [Table 4](#) for a comprehensive list of masked counties) were originally from another county.

[Table 5](#) and [Figure 3](#) present point-in-time rates and counts of young people residing outside California. The number of out-of-state young people increased from 295 in 2018 to 436 in 2022, peaking at 528 in 2021. Nevada (16%-20%), Arizona (8%-11%), and Texas (7%-10%) hosted the greatest proportion of young people from California. Among masked states, states in the South (15%-19%) and Midwest (11%-16%) were the most popular destinations.





Discussion

The current analysis is among the first to measure the frequency, origin, and destination of young people living in OOC residences. Results show that OOC residences are common and young people move throughout California and beyond while in extended foster care. We also show that the proportion of young people living outside their supervising counties has increased in recent years. Heat maps showed there are “hot spots” for OOC residences. In California, counties in the Bay Area and southern California showed relatively high rates of intercounty emigration and immigration. Inland Empire counties (Riverside and San Bernardino) and several counties in the Central Valley (Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced) were home to many young people supervised by other counties. About half of all young people living interstate resided in Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Georgia, Oregon, or Washington.

Without additional data, we cannot ascertain why young people move outside their supervising counties beyond the typical push and pull factors that shape residency choices in early adulthood, such as postsecondary education, employment opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. In some ways, where young people choose to live reflects demographic shifts in the general population. Since 2000, California’s population growth rate has decreased, partly due to emigration to surrounding states with lower living costs, including Nevada, Arizona, and Texas (Cain & Hehmeyer, 2023). Similarly, high living costs in the Bay Area

and coastal regions of southern California have resulted in substantial migration to the Central Valley and Inland Empire, respectively (Boarnet et al., 2023; De Lara et al., 2023).

Young people with at least one OOC residence experienced residential mobility at twice the rate of young people who remained in their supervising county. Frequent moves can affect relationships and support networks, which are a source of resilience for young adults aging out of foster care. Research on California’s population in extended foster care shows that young adults with an “enduring relationship” (e.g., a deep, interpersonal relationship that lasted several years) experienced fewer economic hardships, less food insecurity, and were less likely to become unhoused (Okpych et al., 2023).

Further, more than 40% of young people with an OOC residence were diagnosed with a physical, mental, or developmental disability at some point during their time in foster care. This was somewhat greater than the proportion of young people with such diagnoses among those who did not have an OOC residence, suggesting these young people may have greater ongoing service needs.

Broadly, findings shed light on the complexities county-administered child welfare programs face in delivering services for young adults. Most young people (95.4%) with an OOC residence did not experience any change in their supervising county, despite the implementation of AB 1712 allowing the county of residence to assume

the supervision of a non-minor dependent after 12 months of continuous residence (AB 1712, 2012). This highlights the need for counties to be adequately prepared and resourced to provide services beyond their county lines. OOC residence “hot spots” may be natural targets for these efforts. Finally, our results underscore the need for policies that standardize practices and

protocols for addressing OOC residences, particularly when it is not feasible for supervising counties to provide services (e.g., due to distance or service provider availability). These protocols can ensure coordination and continuity of care while young people establish themselves in their new communities.





Conclusion

California's implementation of extended foster care has ushered in an array of services that support young people as they navigate early adulthood. Ensuring these services move with young people is likely no small feat, requiring substantial preparation, inter-county coordination, and allocation of necessary funding and resources. The findings of this report underscore

not only the need for such preparation, coordination, and resource allocation but also show where these efforts should be targeted. Nonetheless, additional research is needed to better understand the challenges of serving young people in OOC residences.

Perspectives from young people, their caseworkers, service providers, and policymakers are needed to ensure the development of standardized protocols for addressing OOC residences is ultimately responsive to the service needs of young people.





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Table 1. Study sample characteristics

Variable	Any NMD OOC Residence			χ ²	V
	No	Yes	Total		
	N = 9,297	N = 7,170	N = 16,467		
	%	%	%		
Birth sex				13.1*	.03
Female	56.6	59.4	57.9		
Male	43.4	40.6	42.1		
Race/ethnicity				249.6*	.12
Black	23.2	28.9	25.7		
White	18.6	24.4	21.1		
Latine	52.8	41.7	48.0		
Asian	2.4	2.8	2.6		
Native American	1.0	1.2	1.1		
Missing	2.0	1.0	1.5		
Age at first entry				13.1	.03
0-5 years	20.9	23.1	21.9		
6-11 years	21.3	21.5	21.4		
12-17 years	57.7	55.3	56.7		
Any disability	40.4	44.4	42.2	25.9*	.04
Time in care as a minor				17.2*	.03
2+ years	67.4	70.5	68.8		
Any OOC residence as a minor	35.3	73.2	51.8	2324.5*	.38
Time in EFC (2+ years)¹	82.1	84.7	83.2	20.4*	.04
Predominant NMD residence				239.3*	.12
Foster family home	4.0	1.3	2.8		
Absent from placement	0.8	0.7	0.7		
Congregate care	2.7	2.7	2.7		
Foster family agency	6.7	5.9	6.3		
Relative	6.8	3.4	5.3		
Mixed/other	2.6	2.2	2.4		
SILP	48.6	55.8	51.7		
THP	28.0	28.1	28.0		
NMD placements				294.5*	.13
2+ per care year	7.4	15.9	11.1		
County urbanicity				448.6*	.17
Rural	4.0	7.4	5.5		
Urban	19.9	27.3	23.1		
Large Urban	36.5	40.2	38.1		
Los Angeles County	39.6	25.1	33.3		
Any OOC residence (all)	--	--	43.5		
Any OOC residence (in-state)	--	--	37.1		

Notes. ¹Denotes cumulative time in extended foster care **p* < .001; OOC residence includes in- and out-of-state OOC residences.

Table 2. Comparison of NMDs with in- and out-of-state OOC residences

	Type of OOC Residence			χ^2	V
	Out-of-state	In-state	Total		
	N = 1,654	N = 5,516	N = 7,170		
	%	%	%		
Birth sex				0.03	.00
Female	59.6	59.4	59.4		
Male	40.4	40.6	40.6		
Race/ethnicity				84.5*	.11
Black	30.8	28.3	28.9		
White	31.4	22.4	24.4		
Latine	33.4	44.2	41.7		
Asian	2.4	2.9	2.8		
Native American	1.3	1.2	1.2		
Missing	0.7	1.1	1.0		
Age at first entry				3.4	.02
0–5 years	21.5	23.6	23.1		
6–11 years	21.8	21.4	21.5		
12–17 years	56.7	54.9	55.3		
Any disability	45.5	44.1	44.4	1.0	.01
Time in care as a minor	71.6	70.1	70.5	1.4	.01
OOO Residence as minor	60.5	77.0	73.2	175.1*	.16
Time in EFC				16.9*	.05
2+ years	87.9	83.8	84.7		
Predominant NMD residence				511.8*	.27
Foster family home	0.7	1.5	1.3		
Absent from placement	0.4	0.8	0.7		
Congregate care	0.9	3.2	2.7		
Foster family agency	1.6	7.2	5.9		
Relative	2.7	3.6	3.4		
Mixed/other	1.9	2.3	2.2		
SILP	79.5	48.6	55.8		
THP	12.4	32.8	28.1		
NMD placements				4.9	.03
2+ per care year	17.7	15.4	15.9		
Supervising agency change	0.7	4.6	3.7	55.2*	.09
County urbanicity				51.1*	.08
Rural	7.3	7.5	7.4		
Urban	21.6	29.0	27.3		
Large Urban	40.4	40.1	40.2		
Los Angeles County	30.7	23.5	25.1		

Notes. * $p < .001$

Table 3. Point-in-time percentages of NMDs in OOC residences by supervising county

Host County	Jan. 1, 2018		Jan. 1, 2019		Jan. 1, 2020		Jan. 1, 2021		Jan. 1, 2022	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Alameda	46.7	133	50.7	157	44.8	133	45.2	142	45.5	96
Contra Costa	38.4	51	23.9	37	31.4	48	39.6	65	40.8	49
Fresno	10.8	17	9.4	15	15.1	28	12.7	28	15.1	31
Humboldt	36.4	12	41.0	16	40.4	19	27.5	19	31.7	19
Kern	5.7	11	8.3	17	14.1	28	10.1	25	8.9	16
Los Angeles	18.7	379	20.5	440	22.8	503	24.7	680	23.7	542
Merced	29.3	22	34.7	26	35.5	27	46.5	40	44.0	33
Orange	25.9	74	25.0	73	28.2	83	27.9	80	25.7	82
Placer	43.6	17	39.0	16	43.2	16	43.8	21	44.8	13
Riverside	40.2	133	38.2	120	37.2	115	35.6	132	31.0	96
Sacramento	28.0	98	24.4	84	23.8	78	27.6	109	26.6	77
San Bernardino	25.1	99	31.4	150	33.5	170	39.8	211	36.7	191
San Diego	10.9	34	11.0	33	13.0	35	13.5	48	13.6	37
San Francisco	66.5	111	65.0	115	70.1	122	71.5	138	62.5	90
San Joaquin	27.4	59	31.0	75	24.6	54	33.2	84	39.4	69
San Mateo	62.9	44	61.3	38	58.2	39	60.0	45	64.8	35
Santa Barbara	35.5	27	39.4	28	42.0	21	38.1	24	32.3	20
Santa Clara	26.0	53	23.1	43	20.0	36	22.6	50	30.5	54
Solano	43.3	26	48.0	24	46.2	18	58.2	32	54.7	29
Sonoma	22.2	18	28.1	18	25.5	14	19.2	14	15.9	11
Stanislaus	30.1	25	27.7	23	37.1	33	36.6	45	37.7	40
Tulare	11.9	12	17.5	17	23.6	25	24.3	36	15.9	21
Ventura	15.5	13	15.5	15	10.9	11	14.2	17	14.3	15
Yolo	57.1	28	50.9	28	58.7	37	63.9	46	66.0	33
Masked counties	32.7	187	32.2	193	35.7	223	37.1	261	38.1	218
Total	26.4	1683	27.1	1801	28.7	1916	30.1	2392	29.1	1917

Notes. Counties with fewer than 11 non-minor dependents in an OOC residence at any of the five time points were masked to comply with data de-identification requirements. These counties include Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Plumas, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, & Yuba.

Table 4. Point-in-time percentages of NMDs not supervised by their county of residence (in-state OOC residence only)

Host County	Jan. 1, 2018		Jan. 1, 2019		Jan. 1, 2020		Jan. 1, 2021		Jan. 1, 2022	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Alameda	31.8	71	31.7	71	32.5	79	37.7	104	41.6	82
Butte	46.0	34	49.3	33	45.6	31	35.4	28	34.9	23
Contra Costa	45.0	67	37.9	72	36.8	61	42.8	74	45.4	59
Fresno	21.8	39	24.5	47	27.7	60	26.2	68	24.7	57
Kern	15.4	33	19.6	46	28.8	69	24.5	72	26.9	60
Los Angeles	4.2	73	4.3	76	4.8	85	4.2	91	4.3	79
Merced	30.3	23	25.8	17	33.8	25	41.0	32	37.3	25
Orange	23.2	64	22.6	64	23.6	65	27.6	79	18.6	54
Riverside	41.9	143	46.0	165	46.4	168	49.7	236	49.1	206
Sacramento	28.6	101	28.1	102	31.5	115	35.7	159	34.3	111
San Bernardino	34.8	158	35.6	181	35.5	186	42.5	236	36.4	188
San Diego	20.9	73	20.0	67	23.0	70	20.4	79	19.8	58
San Francisco	32.5	27	39.2	40	38.8	33	34.5	29	29.9	23
San Joaquin	24.6	51	28.3	66	25.6	57	30.2	73	36.9	62
San Mateo	42.2	19	42.9	18	34.9	15	40.0	20	50.0	19
Santa Clara	20.5	39	17.8	31	24.2	46	24.0	54	28.1	48
Solano	48.5	32	50.9	27	58.0	29	61.7	37	38.5	15
Sonoma	22.2	18	25.8	16	32.8	20	28.9	24	23.7	18
Stanislaus	52.9	65	49.6	59	50.0	56	44.7	63	45.5	55
Ventura	26.0	25	32.8	40	32.3	43	30.9	46	36.2	51
Yolo	60.4	32	46.0	23	33.3	13	39.5	17	45.2	14
Masked counties	27.7	201	26.4	195	27.7	200	28.2	243	25.0	174
Total	22.8	1388	23.1	1456	24.3	1526	25.2	1864	24.1	1481

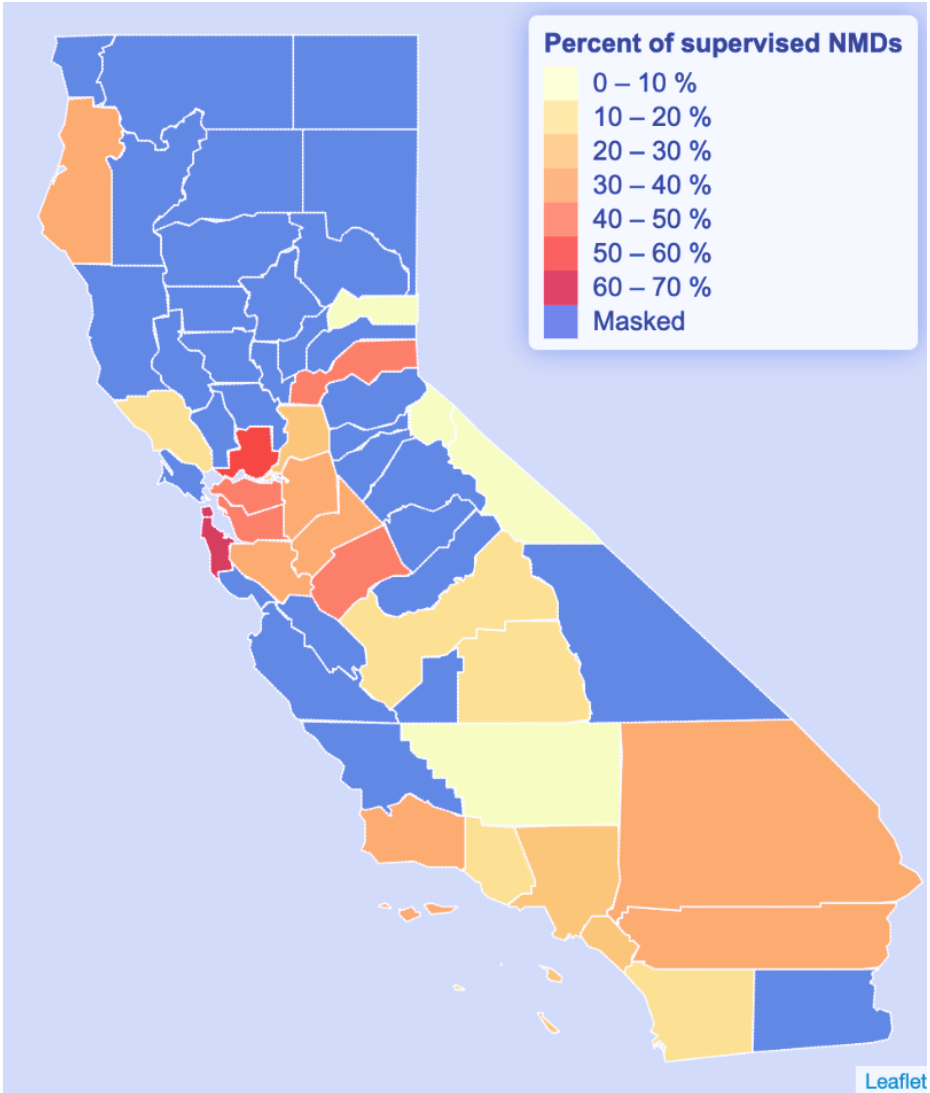
Notes. Counties hosting fewer than 11 non-minor dependents in an OOC placement at any of the five time points were masked to comply with data de-identification requirements. These counties include Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, & Yuba.

Table 5. PIT percentage of NMDs with out-of-state residences by host state

Host State	Jan. 1, 2018		Jan. 1, 2019		Jan. 1, 2020		Jan. 1, 2021		Jan. 1, 2022	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Arizona	11.9	35	11.9	41	10.3	40	10.4	55	8.7	38
Georgia	5.1	15	3.2	11	2.8	11	3.2	17	3.0	13
Nevada	20.0	59	16.2	56	16.7	65	17.8	94	16.7	73
Oregon	6.1	18	6.7	23	6.4	25	6.8	36	6.4	28
Texas	7.1	21	7.8	27	9.0	35	9.3	49	10.3	45
Washington	5.1	15	7.8	27	6.2	24	6.6	35	4.1	18
West	10.9	32	10.7	37	12.3	48	8.5	45	8.7	38
Midwest	11.5	34	12.5	43	12.8	50	14.6	77	16.1	70
South	15.6	46	15.1	52	15.1	59	17.2	91	19.7	86
Northeast	6.8	20	8.1	28	8.5	33	5.5	29	6.2	27
Total	100	295	100	345	100	390	100	528	100	436

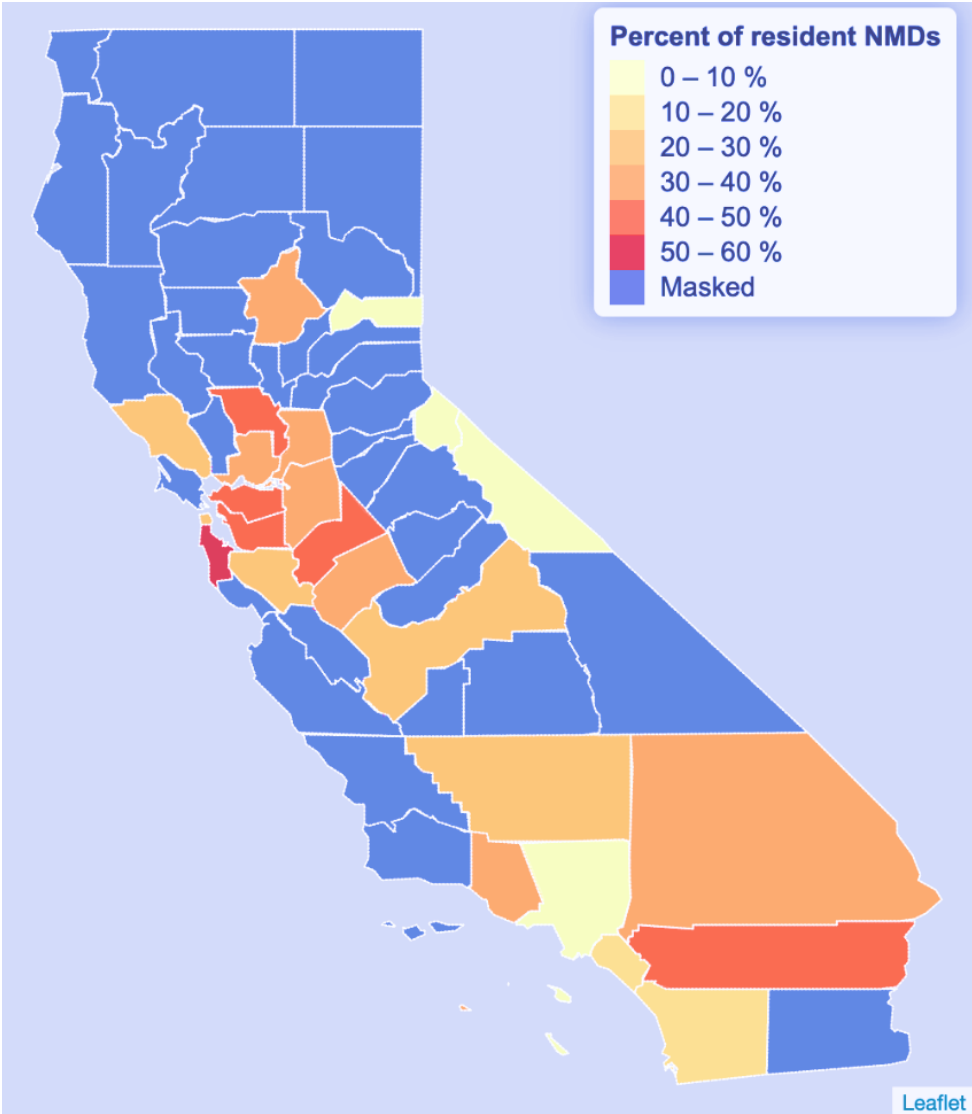
Notes. States hosting fewer than 11 non-minor dependents in an out-of-state placement at any of the five time points were masked to comply with data de-identification requirements. These states are grouped as follows in accordance with the U.S. Census Regions: West- Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico; Midwest- North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio; South- Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Washington, D.C.; Northeast: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey.

Figure 1. Percent of supervised NMDs residing out-of-county



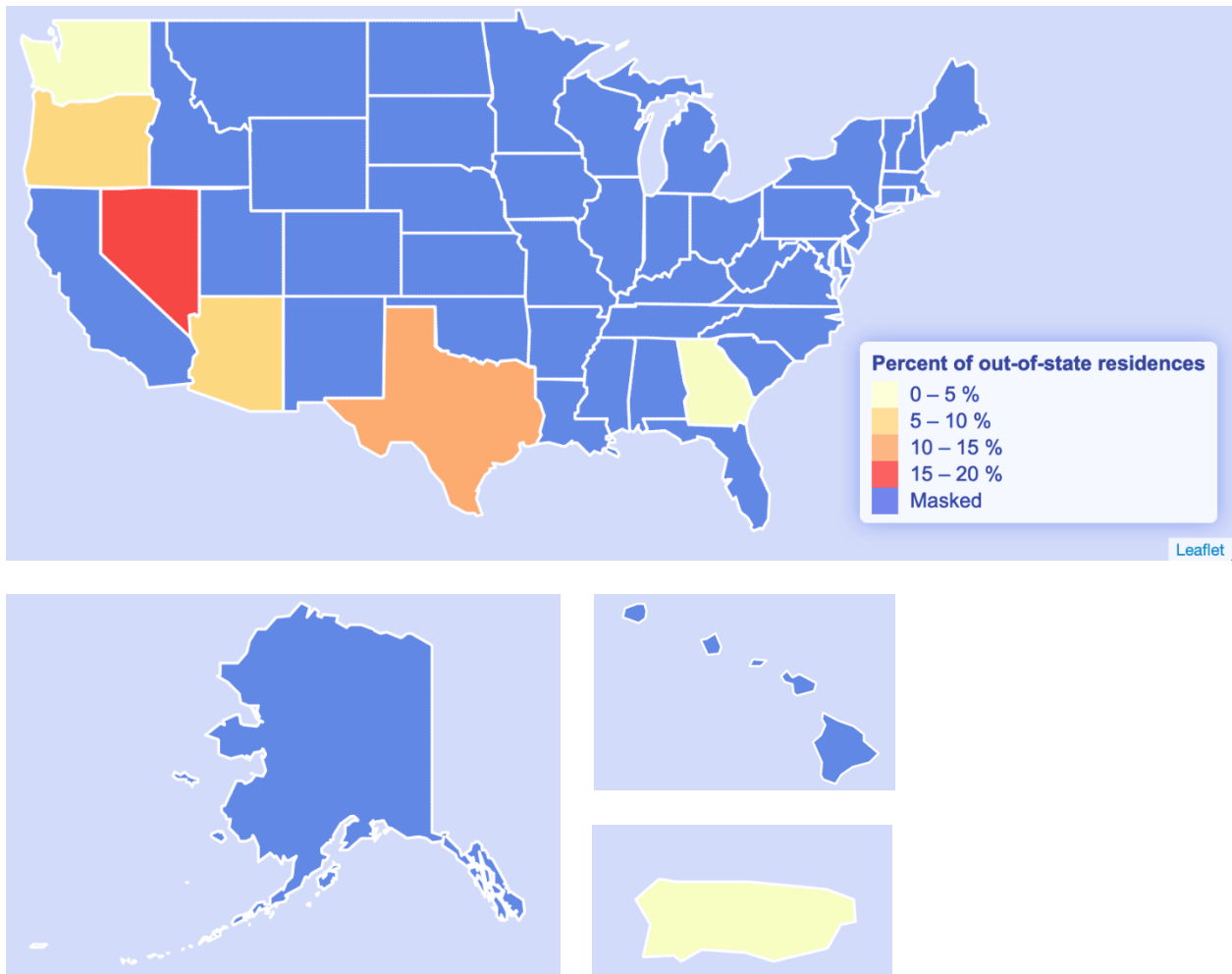
Note. Figure displays point-in-time rates as of January 1, 2022.

Figure 2. Percent of resident NMDs supervised by another county



Note. Figure displays point-in-time rates as of January 1, 2022.

Figure 3. Out-of-state NMD residences by state



Note. Figure displays point-in-time rates as of January 1, 2022. Maps show rates for all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.