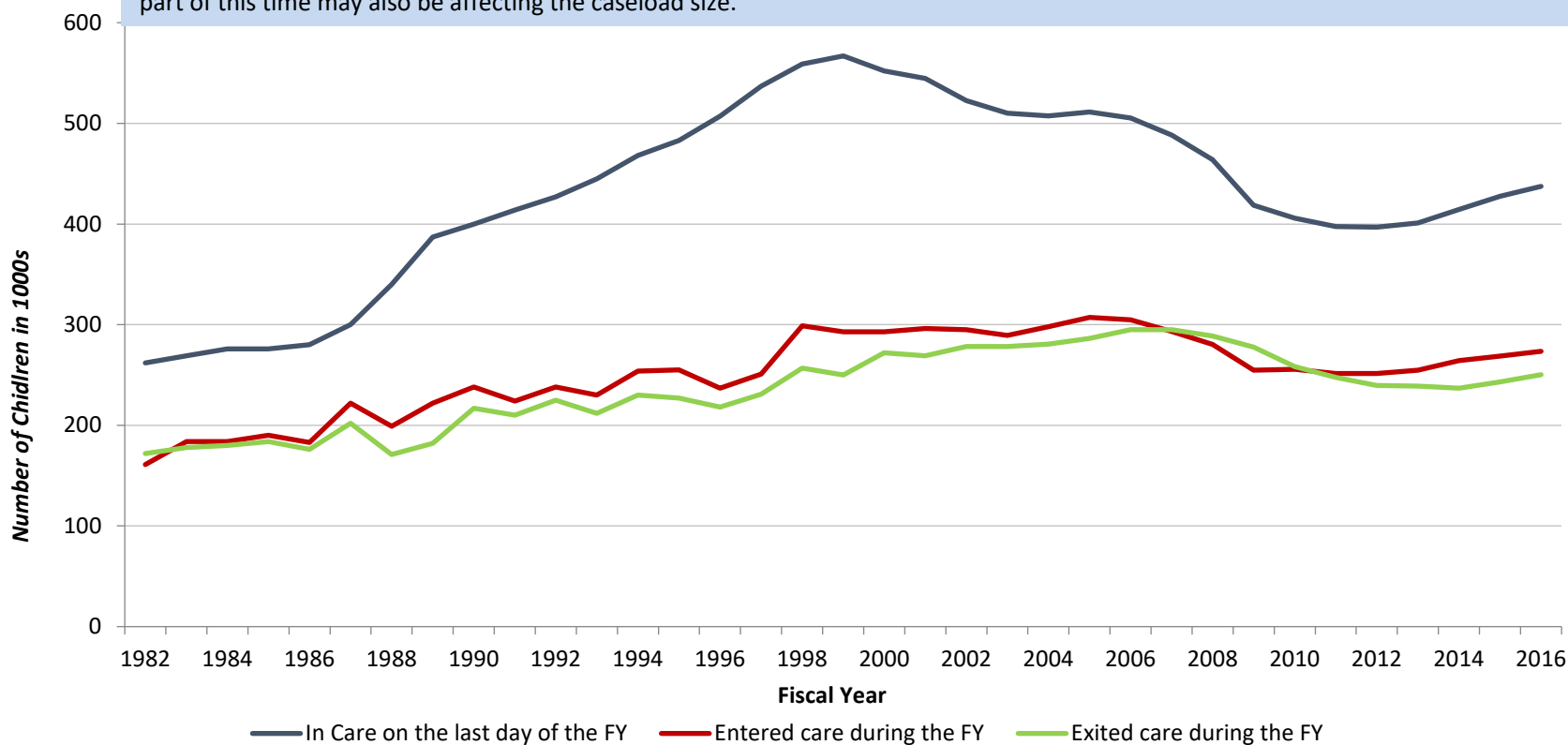


Figure 11-3. Trends in Foster Care Use, FY1982-FY2016

The number of children in care on the last day of a fiscal year is described as the foster care caseload. The foster care caseload (blue line) grew sharply from the middle 1980s through the late 1990s even while the number of entries to care (red line) grew more modestly. This was true because fewer children exited care (green line) each year and children had longer stays in foster care. Beginning around FY2000 and through about FY2006, the number of children in care declined even while the number of entries remained relatively unchanged. This suggests that the caseload decline resulted from more and quicker exits from care during this time period. From FY2007 through FY2016, the number of children in care on the last day of the fiscal year and entries to care moved roughly in tandem – that is they declined through about FY2012 before increasing. This may suggest that the initial declines (and more recent increases) in children entering care may have had the strongest effect on foster care use in that period. However, a slowdown in the number of children exiting care during a part of this time may also be affecting the caseload size.



Source Figure prepared by CRS on October 31, 2018 for the 2018 version of the House Ways and Means Committee Green Book. For information on data used in this chart see Table 11-3. Readers are cautioned that the data system used to produce these trend lines was different for FY1982-FY1996 than for remaining years shown, that data quality is expected to have improved in the most recent decade, and further, the exits from foster care may be undercounted in some years and especially in the first part of the 2000s. See the “technical discussion” beginning on page 2 at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/trends_fostercare_adoption_07thru16.pdf.

Table 11-3. National Estimates of Foster Care Use, FY1982-FY2016

Rate equals the number of children in a given category for every 1,000 children (under age 18) in the U.S. population.

Fiscal Year	Entered Care During Year		Total Served During Year		Exited Care During Year	In Care Last Day of Year	
	<i>number</i>	<i>rate</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>rate</i>		<i>number</i>	<i>rate</i>
1982	161,000	2.6	434,000	6.9	172,000	262,000	4.2
1983	184,000	2.9	447,000	7.1	178,000	269,000	4.3
1984	184,000	2.9	456,000	7.3	180,000	276,000	4.4
1985	190,000	3.0	460,000	7.3	184,000	276,000	4.4
1986	183,000	2.9	456,000	7.3	176,000	280,000	4.5
1987	222,000	3.5	502,000	8.0	202,000	300,000	4.8
1988	199,000	3.1	511,000	8.1	171,000	340,000	5.4
1989	222,000	3.5	569,000	9.0	182,000	387,000	6.1
1990	238,000	3.7	617,000	9.6	217,000	400,000	6.2
1991	224,000	3.4	624,000	9.6	210,000	414,000	6.4
1992	238,000	3.6	652,000	9.9	225,000	427,000	6.5
1993	230,000	3.4	657,000	9.8	212,000	445,000	6.6
1994	254,000	3.7	698,000	10.3	230,000	468,000	6.9
1995	255,000	3.7	710,000	10.4	227,000	483,000	7.0
1996	237,000	3.4	725,000	10.5	218,000	507,000	7.3
1997	251,000	3.6	758,000	10.7	231,000	537,000	7.6
1998	299,000	4.2	817,000	11.5	257,000	559,000	7.9
1999	293,000	4.1	812,000	11.4	250,000	567,000	8.0
2000	293,000	4.0	811,000	11.0	272,000	552,000	7.5
2001	296,000	4.0	813,000	11.0	269,000	545,000	7.4
2002	295,000	4.0	800,000	10.8	278,000	523,000	7.1
2003	289,000	3.9	787,000	10.6	278,000	510,000	6.9
2004	298,000	4.0	787,000	10.6	281,000	508,000	6.5
2005	307,000	4.1	797,000	10.7	286,000	511,000	6.5
2006	305,000	4.1	800,000	10.7	295,000	505,000	6.5
2007	293,000	3.9	783,000	10.4	295,000	488,000	6.3
2008	280,000	3.7	752,000	10.0	289,000	464,000	5.9
2009	255,000	3.4	696,000	9.3	278,000	419,000	5.3
2010	256,000	3.4	664,000	8.8	258,000	406,000	5.2
2011	251,000	3.4	645,000	8.7	247,000	398,000	5.1
2012	251,000	3.4	636,000	8.5	239,000	397,000	5.1
2013	255,000	3.4	640,000	8.6	239,000	401,000	5.2
2014	269,000	3.5	651,000	8.7	237,000	414,000	5.4
2015	270,000	3.6	670,000	9.0	243,000	427,000	5.6
2016	274,000	3.7	687,000	9.2	250,000	437,000	5.6

Source: Table updated by the Congressional Research Service on October 31, 2018 for the 2018 version of the House Ways and Means Committee Green Book. All data were rounded to the nearest thousand for display. However, whenever more precise data were available, those data were used to calculate the rates shown.

Notes: Some data shown may vary from previous versions of this table because foster care data are revised if states submit corrected information and because the Census Bureau may revise its population estimates. For all years the numbers of children entering, served, exiting, or in care shown in the table are based on children of any age. However, for FY2001-FY2016, the rates shown for children entering or served are based on children who were reported as under age 18 and, for FY2004-FY2016, the rate shown for children in care is based on those reported as under age 18. U.S. Census Bureau annual estimates of population (under age 18) were used to calculate rates. U.S. population estimates include the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) through 1996, and the 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico (PR) for 1997-2013. (PR child population estimates for FY1997-FY1999 are based on the 2000 census). Foster care estimates are as provided by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) for 1982-1996 (based on voluntary reporting) and by HHS, ACF, ACYF, Children's Bureau for 1997-2016 (based on required reporting by each of 50 states, DC and PR under the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting Systems (AFCARS)).