

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Unaccompanied refugee minors from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Myanmar, and Somalia: Educational attainment, economic well-being, and social ties in the United States

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## Abstract

In 2019, there were 21.3 million refugees around the globe. A small number of these are accepted to the United States each year under the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Foster Care Program. There is currently limited research on the outcomes of young adults served through this unique program. In this paper, we share outcomes (educational attainment, economic well-being, and social ties) for young adults who leave care from the countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Myanmar, and Somalia. The authors report descriptive statistics for young adults who discharged from the foster care program ( $n = 388$ ) as well as Pearson's Chi-square tests to test correlations between outcomes and country of origin. Results show that youth from Myanmar is most likely to be enrolled in college at time of discharge. Youth from the DRC is equally likely to be enrolled in college or to have only completed a GED or high school diploma. Youth from Myanmar is more likely to be employed than youth from other countries. Eritrean youth was more likely to be lacking economic self-sufficiency at time of discharge than youth from other countries. Results from this study suggest ways that service providers can tailor service plans to help youth from different countries achieve the best outcomes, and pose questions for future research.

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## 1. Introduction

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are a specific a group of people who have been forced to flee their homelands due to persecution (or the fear of persecution), based on their race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group (UNHCR, 2021).

The Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Foster Care Program was established in the 1970s. The URM program is a specialized foster care system that uses best practices

from the child welfare system and the refugee resettlement programs and accepts qualified immigrant and refugee children who lack parents or caregivers at time of entry to the U.S. The goal of the foster care program is to be culturally competent, offering cultural and religious community linkages to meet unaccompanied children's unique needs (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2013). To accomplish this, each URM program provides specialized training to foster parents and staff to help build a supportive environment for the children (USCCB, 2013). The URM program works to advance social justice through the view that "everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities" (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017, paragraph 2) and is designed to provide opportunities to refugee youth that is equal to those of U.S. born youth served through foster care (USCCB, 2013).

## 1.1. Study justification and literature review

The well-being of refugee children in their host countries is important to protect their human rights and advance their ability to participate in society. Unfortunately, there is little research on the outcomes of refugee children, especially those served specifically by the URM program. Luster *et al.* (2009) found that Sudanese youth served by the URM program struggled to adjust as foster parents wanted to have authority over the teenagers and they were used to living on their own in groups, and that misunderstandings around cultural traditions only created deeper conflict and struggles in communication. A study by Socha *et al.* (2016) found that Eritrean youth had vastly different expectations before arrival as compared to what they found when they entered the foster care program, leading to discontent with the program initially and distrust in their social networks that had fueled initial expectations of resettlement. Evans *et al.* (2021) looked at youth (both immigrant and refugee) served by the US URM program to assess factors that influence self-sufficiency on discharge. They found that employment, English proficiency, and educational attainment all had significant relationships with self-sufficiency (Evans *et al.*, 2021). Due to the dearth of literature out of the United States, at times, researchers and service providers rely on research about the integration of refugee children in other countries such as Sweden (Wimelius *et al.*, 2017), Canada (Baffoe, 2011), Ireland (Horgan & Ni Raghallaigh, 2019), and Britain and Europe (Bell, 2005).

When looking at youth served by the URM program at large, there is also research into the outcomes that focuses specifically on youth from Central America. For example, youth's educational outcomes have been assessed for youth from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Crea *et al.*,

2017), and employment outcomes have been assessed for youth from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Hasson 3<sup>rd</sup> *et al.*, 2021). However, the experiences in home country, migration journey, benefits available on arrival to the US, and discriminations faced in the US are vastly different for youth who enters as refugees as compared to those who enter as undocumented immigrants through the South US border. Therefore, this study is looking at education, employment, and social ties (dimensions known to be important in terms of immigrant integration) for refugee youth from Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Somalia as there are little quantitative data on these youth and they are some of the other refugee countries that are well represented in the dataset. The literature noted above that compares youth from different Central American countries has been utilized by social service providers in helping to tailor case plans and make inferences about what services may be more or less beneficial to different youth. Therefore, we propose a similar methodology and compare outcomes across the largest groups of refugees in the URM program.

According to Calvo *et al.* (2016), integration consists of three interrelated dimensions: Social, economic, and political. Therefore, this study aims to examine the indicators of social and economic participation, as there was no measure of political involvement in the administrative dataset. Others authors support the value of social connections in the lives of immigrants and show that it can lead to better mental health and well-being (Ager & Strang, 2008; Elsayed *et al.*, 2019; Revens *et al.*, 2021; Puyat, 2013) and ease the transition to a new environment (Bankston CL 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014). We suggest that education is one aspect of social participation in line with Calvo *et al.* theory above. The literature widely supports the importance of education in terms of immigrant integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Coomans, 2018; Naidoo, 2009). Similarly, a wide body of research supports the value that employment plays in integration and community involvement for refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008; Capps *et al.*, 2015; Hasson 3<sup>rd</sup> *et al.*, 2021; Mirembe *et al.*, 2019; National Academies of Sciences *et al.*, 2015). Self-sufficiency is a common metric used by the Office of Resettlement to measure the success of refugees in the US (Halpern, 2008). Self-sufficiency goes beyond holding a job and Halpern (2008) noted that some of the challenges to self-sufficiency include lack of resources, transportation, and language barriers.

## 1.2. Research questions

This study is guided by three research questions, focusing on the differences in county of origin for youth served through the URM program. They are as follows: RQ1: What are the levels of educational attainment for youth from the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Myanmar, and Somalia? RQ2: What are the employment outcomes for youth from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Myanmar, and Somalia? and RQ3: What social ties exist for youth from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Myanmar, and Somalia?

## 2. Data and methods

### 2.1. Data source

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), one of the national agencies that administer the URM program, collects administrative data on each youth at the time that they discharge from the URM program. The administrative data is cross-sectional and contains a series of youth outcomes such as living situation, employment status, educational attainment level, English language skills, access to health care, and more. This information has been shared with the university and secondary data analysis was approved through the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC's) Institutional Review Board. The sample for this study includes 392 youth who was discharged from an LIRS URM program during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015 or FFY2016.

The majority, 72.70% ( $n = 285$ ), of the youth who exited URM care were male as compared with 27.30% ( $n = 107$ ) females. Of the 392 youth in the sample, 25.77% ( $n = 101$ ) are from Honduras, 19.90% ( $n = 78$ ) are from Guatemala, 10.20% ( $n = 40$ ) are from Mexico, 8.67% ( $n = 43$ ) are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 5.87% ( $n = 23$ ) are from Myanmar, 5.36% ( $n = 21$ ) are from each El Salvador and Somalia, 4.08% ( $n = 16$ ) are from Eritrea, 1.53% ( $n = 6$ ) are from Sudan, 1.28% ( $n = 5$ ) are from Nepal, and 1% or less ( $n = 4$  or less) are from the each of the following countries: Afghanistan, Belize, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Thailand. The present study focuses on youth from DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, and Myanmar as they are the four countries with the highest number of refugees in the sample. The other countries with high numbers of youth (Honduras *et al.*) do not have refugee status, and many of these outcomes have been studied (Crea *et al.*, 2017; Hasson 3<sup>rd</sup> *et al.*, 2021). The average length of stay in the URM program for the youth in the study was 1002.77 days, or a little under 3 years.

Within the sample, the majority of URM youth discharge from the foster care program during the young adulthood years of 18 – 23. The age of majority for foster care services varies by state, and URM programs are located across the United States and at the time of data collection were in Arizona, California, Colorado, Washington

DC, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington state. Only 1.78% ( $n = 7$ ) of youths who discharged from the URM program were below the age of 14 years. Five youths (1.28%) were 15 years of age, 0.77% ( $n = 3$ ) of youths were 16, and 2.04% ( $n = 8$ ) of youths were 17 years old. The majority were aged 18 or over at the time of discharge: 12.75% ( $n = 50$ ) were 18, 22.19% ( $n = 87$ ) were 19, 16.07% ( $n = 63$ ) were 20 years old, 32.40% ( $n = 127$ ) were 21, 4.34% ( $n = 17$ ) were 22, 3.06% ( $n = 12$ ) were 23, and 0.51% ( $n = 2$ ) were 24 years of age. For 2.30% ( $n = 9$ ) of youths, the date of birth was missing and so age at discharge could not be calculated. The average age at discharge was 19.7 years old.

### 2.2. Data management

The researcher assessed the dataset for missing data and worked with staff at LIRS to fill in as many fields as possible. Any data that appear inconsistent were questioned and rectified to ensure data integrity of the sample. A codebook was created for the dataset which lists all possible responses and assigned a numeric value for nominal variables, for ease of data analysis. Finally, all string variables were transformed into numeric values and the data were imported to Stata 14SE for analysis. List-wise deletion was used to eliminate incomplete files as there were very few; the final sample was 388 youths.

### 2.3. Measures of analysis

The outcome variables of interest were level of education, economic well-being, and social ties. The youth's highest level of education was recorded as one of the following: (1) K-12; (2) GED, high school diploma, attending a vocational technology program, or attending an associate's degree program; and (3) attending a 4-year college.

Two different measures of economic well-being were considered in this analysis: Employment status and self-sufficiency. Employment status was recorded for each URM youth at the time of discharge and for the purposes of this analyses was dichotomously coded as (1) unemployed if the response was: Unemployed, no work authorization, not employed due to disability, or attending school full time and unable to work; or (2) employed if the response was employed part time or employed full time. Self-sufficiency was dichotomously coded as (1) not self-sufficient if the response was no income or income limits standards of living or (2) self-sufficient if the response was income meets basic needs, self-sufficient, or income is beyond enough.

Social ties were measured by the youth's connections to supportive adults. The literature strongly suggests that

positive adult roles and mentors are beneficial to both youths in foster care (Avery, 2011), immigrant youth (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009), and most specifically immigrant youth in foster care (Evans *et al.*, 2022; Socha *et al.*, 2022). For youth who exited care in FFY2015, the variable was yes or no, where the caseworker determined if the youth had a connection to a positive adult role model. For youth who discharged in FFY2016, the options were more inclusive, using a Likert scale to rate both the quality and quantity of these adult relationships. Therefore, the responses for youth who existed care in FFY2016 were simplified to a yes/no response for analysis. To do so, any youth who scored a 1 “youth has no social connections” for either the quantity or quality measure were coded as (2) no; and for youth with a score of 2 or more for both quality and quantity of social connections they were coded as (1) yes. In addition, the variable that describes the youth’s living situation on discharge is being used to describe social connections. This was dichotomously coded as (1) living with others if the response was living with friends, relatives, former foster family, adoptive family, in college, or in a residential program or (2) living alone if the response was living alone, or homeless. Youths who were living in a residential treatment center or incarcerated were eliminated from this analysis.

## 2.4. Analysis methods

Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the characteristics of the sample. Then, the author used cross-tabulations and Pearson’s Chi-square tests through Stata 14SE to assess the significance of relationships between variables. The relationship of each country: Myanmar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Somalia, as compared with all “other” countries was individually assessed in comparison to the youth’s status at discharge for the level of education, employment status, self-sufficiency, social connections, and living status at discharge.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Educational attainment outcomes

The educational outcomes for youth served by the URM program vary greatly. At discharge, 56.52% ( $n = 221$ ) of all youths were still enrolled in a K-12 setting, 24.81% ( $n = 97$ ) had completed high school, a GED, or were in a vocational technology or associate’s degree program, and only 18.67% ( $n = 73$ ) were enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program. For the level of education, there is a statistically significant relationship with youth from Myanmar  $\chi^2(2, 388) = 24.09, P < 0.001$  when compared to youth from other countries. As shown in Table 1, of the youth from Myanmar, they are most likely to be enrolled in college. Similarly, for youth from the Democratic Republic of the

Congo when compared to youth from other countries, there was a significant relationship with level of education  $\chi^2(2, 388) = 14.45, P < 0.01$ . Youths from the DRC are equally likely to be enrolled in a college or have a GED/HS diploma or be attending a certificate program at the time of discharge from foster care. There were no significant relationships found between educational outcomes and youth from Somalia or Eritrea.

The analysis was also run with all countries of interest in one model, as displayed in Table 2. This shows an overall statistically significant relationship between country of origin and educational outcomes,  $\chi^2(8, 388) = 39.34, P < 0.001$ . Youths from Myanmar are most likely to be enrolled in college at discharge. Youths from Somalia, Eritrea, and other countries are most likely to still be enrolled in a K-12 education. Congolese youths are fairly evenly distributed across all three educational outcomes.

### 3.2. Economic well-being outcomes

More than half, 60.99% ( $n = 233$ ) of the youths in the sample were employed and 62.23% ( $n = 117$ ) were self-sufficient. There is a statistically significant relationship between Burmese youth (those from Myanmar) and employment  $X^2(1, 379) = 4.37, P < 0.05$ , showing that they are more likely to be employed (Table 3). There were no statistically significant differences between expected and actual counts found between employment and youth from the DRC, Eritrea, or Somalia.

However, the analysis for employment was also run with all of the countries of interest in one model, and this did show a statistically significant relationship of  $\chi^2(4, 379) = 10.09, P < 0.05$  as displayed in Table 4. In this analysis, youth from other countries and those from Somalia were about equally likely to be employed versus not employed, whereas youths from Myanmar and DRC were more likely to be employed and youths from Eritrea were less likely to be employed.

A statistical model was run to examine each country of origin as compared with other countries. The only significant finding at the time was that of Eritrean youth, however, the cell sizes are too small to be valid. Therefore, the results show no significant differences between expected and actual counts found between self-sufficiency and youth from Myanmar, DRC, and Somalia. However, when all countries of origin were compared in one analysis (Table 5), there was a statistically significant relationship between country of origin and self-sufficiency,  $X^2(4, 188) = 13.76, P < 0.01$ . Burmese, Congolese, and Somali youths were more likely to be self-sufficient as compared to not self-sufficient. Youths from other

**Table 1. Educational outcomes by each country of origin (n = 388).**

Country of Origin	K-12	GED or HS Diploma or 2 years	4 years college	Pearson Chi-squared
Analysis 1				24.09***
Myanmar	2 (8.7%)	10 (43.48%)	11 (47.83%)	
Other	216 (59.18%)	87 (23.84%)	62 (16.99%)	
Analysis 2				11.71**
DRC	10 (29.41%)	12 (35.29%)	12 (35.29%)	
Other	208 (58.76%)	85 (24.01%)	61 (17.23%)	
Analysis 3				1.08
Eritrea	11 (68.75%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	
Other	207 (55.65%)	94 (25.27%)	71 (19.09%)	
Analysis 4				0.36
Somalia	12 (57.14%)	6 (28.57%)	3 (14.29%)	
Other	206 (56.13%)	91 (24.80%)	70 (19.07%)	

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

**Table 2. Educational outcomes across countries of origin (n = 388).**

Country of Origin	K-12	GED or HS diploma or 2 years	4 years college	Pearson's Chi-squared
Myanmar	2 (8.7%)	10 (43.48%)	11 (47.83%)	
DRC	10 (29.41%)	12 (35.48%)	12 (35.29%)	
Eritrea	11 (68.75%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	
Somalia	12 (57.14%)	6 (28.57%)	3 (14.29%)	
Other	183 (62.24%)	66 (22.45%)	45 (15.31%)	
				39.34***

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

countries were evenly distributed and Eritrean youths were more likely to be not self-sufficient.

### 3.3. Social ties outcomes

Almost all, 96.90% of youth (n = 375) were determined to have sufficient social connections with positive adult role models and 90.19% of youths were living with others. For the subsample of youth for whom more detailed data were available, 79.79% (n = 154) of youths were said to have a sufficient quantity of social connections and 20.21% (n = 39) did not. About 87.89% (n = 167) of youths in the subsample from FFY2016 had sufficient quality in their social connections. There was no statistically significant relationship for youth of any country when looking at social connections. When looking at the youths' living situation on discharge as a measure of their social connectedness, there were no statistically significant relationships for youth from any country.

**Table 3. Employment outcomes by each country of origin.**

Country of Origin	Not employed	Employed	Pearson's Chi-squared
Analysis 1			4.37*
Myanmar	4 (18.18%)	18 (81.82%)	
Other	145 (40.62%)	212 (59.38%)	
Analysis 2			2.20
DRC	9 (27.27%)	24 (72.73%)	
Other	140 (40.46%)	206 (59.54%)	
Analysis 3			3.76
Eritrea	10 (62.50%)	6 (37.50%)	
Other	139 (38.29%)	224 (61.71%)	
Analysis 4			0.12
Somalia	9 (42.86%)	12 (57.14%)	
Other	140 (39.11%)	218 (60.89%)	

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

**Table 4. Employment outcomes across countries of origin (n = 379).**

Country of Origin	Not employed	Employed	Pearson's Chi-squared
Myanmar	4 (2.68%)	18 (7.83%)	
DRC	9 (6.04%)	24 (10.43%)	
Eritrea	10 (6.71%)	6 (2.61%)	
Somalia	9 (6.04%)	12 (5.22%)	
Other	117 (78.52%)	170 (73.91%)	
Total	149 (100%)	230 (100%)	X <sup>2</sup> = 10.09*

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

**Table 5. Self-sufficiency outcomes across countries of origin (n = 188).**

Country of Origin	Not self-sufficient	Self-sufficient	Pearson's Chi-squared
Myanmar	0	6 (5.13%)	
DRC	5 (7.04%)	13 (11.11%)	
Eritrea	9 (12.68%)	2 (1.71%)	
Somalia	4 (5.63%)	9 (7.69%)	
Other	53 (74.65%)	87 (74.36%)	
			13.76**

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001

## 4. Discussion

Calvo *et al.* (2016) stated that the three interrelated dimensions of immigrant integration are social, economic, and political. Ager and Strang (2008) dig a little deeper and note that the markers of immigrant integration are employment, housing, education, and health, while facilitators of integration

include social connection, language and cultural knowledge, and safety. In this paper, we explore outcomes that both theories use to understand how unaccompanied minors from the DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, and Eritrea are doing after discharge from foster care in terms of educational attainment, employment status/self-sufficiency, and social ties. The results discuss differences among youth from different countries to help inform casework practices and the knowledge base in terms of how this unique group of youth is faring in the US after resettlement. Understanding well-being of vulnerable youths who are both immigrants and living in foster care is important to study to help achieve equity and well-being in society.

This analysis found a significant relationship between country of origin and education showing that youths from Myanmar are most likely to be enrolled in college at discharge whereas youths from Somalia, Eritrea, and other countries are most likely to still be enrolled in a K-12 education. The educational resilience, perseverance, and aspirations of refugee youth have been found to serve as a protective factor in the process of adjustment to a new country (Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2016; Kohli, 2011).

There was a significant relationship found between country of origin and employment. More specifically, youths from Myanmar and DRC were more likely to be employed; and youths from Eritrea were less likely to be employed at the time of discharge from the URM foster care program. At times, people need to move to find adequate employment; however, the dataset used for this study is cross-sectional at time of discharge and does not account for any internal migration that may occur in the months after leaving the foster care program. Mirembe *et al.* (2019) found that young adults in Uganda often moved to the cities to seek employment, and those aged 18 – 22, females, and those without children were more likely to be self-employed. Our study did not look at self-employment outcomes, but this could be an interesting area for future research.

Because self-sufficiency is a common metric used to assess success of refugees in the US (Halpern, 2008), it is included here as an indicator of economic well-being. Burmese, Congolese, and Somali youths were more likely to be self-sufficient as compared to not self-sufficient. When looking at the outcomes for employment and self-sufficiency, they seem to mirror each other in that those who are employed are also likely to be self-sufficient, perhaps due to the income from their employment. Evans *et al.* (2021) also found that employment and self-sufficiency were closed related outcomes.

There were no statistically significant relationships among any of the variables assessed for youth from Somalia. Somali refugees have been arriving to the US for

many years and over 82,000 arrived between 1983 and 2007 (Betancourt *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the Somali youth may have access to a more established cultural network, and therefore, greater supports available to them on arrival to the US than refugees from some of the other countries analyzed, which are newer populations. Social networks provide many benefits to immigrants including better mental health outcomes (Elsayed *et al.*, 2019; Revens *et al.*, 2021) and lower risk of food insecurity (Freiria *et al.*, 2021).

#### 4.1. Limitations

The main limitation to this study is that the variables are from administrative data at an agency and standardized measures were not used to collect data on social connections or self-sufficiency. Standardized measures would be more efficient than relying on a caseworker to use a single item to assess these constructs. In addition, Chi-square analyses are built on the assumption that there is greater than 5 cases in each cell, and for some of the analyses above, this was not the case due to limited number of youth from these countries. Due to the small sample sizes from each country of origin, more in-depth statistical analyses of these data are not appropriate at this time. We do suggest that the social service agencies continue to track data and continue to coproduce statistical analyses in future years so that more than Chi-square analyses can be completed. For the time being, readers should use caution when interpreting the results of this study and use the knowledge to question what they see in the field and inform themselves rather than to make blanket assumptions about URMs from different countries.

#### 4.2. Implications

Overall, the findings from this study help to support the idea that children from different countries have different experiences and, therefore, may have different outcomes. Service providers can use this knowledge when working with youth from these countries to better predict what help youth from a certain country may need, in relation to youth from other countries. Service plans for youth in foster care are typically individualized and this can help agency staff to predict what needs will be based on the ethnicities enrolled in their program. For example, knowing that Eritrean youths have different educational and employment outcomes can help in service planning before emancipation. This could include additional life skills programming for these youth, more targeted support in case planning 1 year from emancipation or targeted support in obtaining a job before emancipation.

This preliminary study shows that more research is needed. First, future analyses should include analysis of more demographics such as gender, length of stay in foster care,

and English level to determine if they have an influence on these outcomes as well as consider confounding outcomes such as mental health that can influence well-being in these areas. Importantly, qualitative studies could take place to ask questions and explain some of the findings in this paper such as why educational attainment is lower for Somali and Eritrean youth as compared to others. Understanding the root causes of these struggles could help URM programs to seek funding and build interventions that will assist a larger number of youth in reaching successful outcomes. Second, by pooling data over the years, or working collaboratively with the other federally granted agency that provides URM care, we could possibly increase the number of youth and, therefore, conduct similar analyses for youth of other countries of origin. If we had larger sample sizes through these methods, regression analyses and structural equation modeling could be used to better assess the relationship between these variables as it is possible that multiple of them could have influences in various ways.

## 5. Conclusion

This study provides descriptive statistics and correlations to help us understand some basic outcomes for youth from Eritrea, Somalia, the DRC, and Myanmar, which are countries with some of the highest enrollment rates in the URM program. Results show that youths from Myanmar are most likely to be enrolled in college and employed at time of discharge when compared to youth from other countries. Youths from the DRC are equally likely to be enrolled in college or to have only completed a GED or high school diploma. Eritrean youths were more likely to be lacking economic self-sufficiency at time of discharge than youth from other countries. The study found no statistically significant findings when it comes to social ties. While these findings are interesting and can assist case managers in adapting service plans for youth of specific backgrounds, they also provide questions for future research.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## Author contributions

*Conceptualization:* Kerri Evans

*Formal analysis:* Kerri Evans

*Writing – original draft:* Kerri Evans

*Writing – review & editing:* Hannah Ferguson

The data owned by Hannah Ferguson.

## Ethics approval and consent to participate

University of Maryland Baltimore County IRB approved secondary data analysis for this study.

## Consent for publication

Hannah Ferguson, staff member of LIRS and owner of the administrative data set provided consent for publication.

## Availability of data

As this data is administrative in nature and stems from files for youth in foster care, this data is not publicly available.

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