

# Changing trends in first entries to out-of-home care in England: Analysis of national administrative data from 1992-2012

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## Introduction

- On average, 60,000 children in England (approximately 0.5% of the child population) spend time in out-of-home care each year.
- However, the proportion who ever enter out-of-home care during their childhood is not known.
- Ethnic variation in rates of entry to care are also poorly described.

### Objective

To calculate how many children ever enter out-of-home care, including variation by ethnicity, and to describe the type of care they receive.

## Method

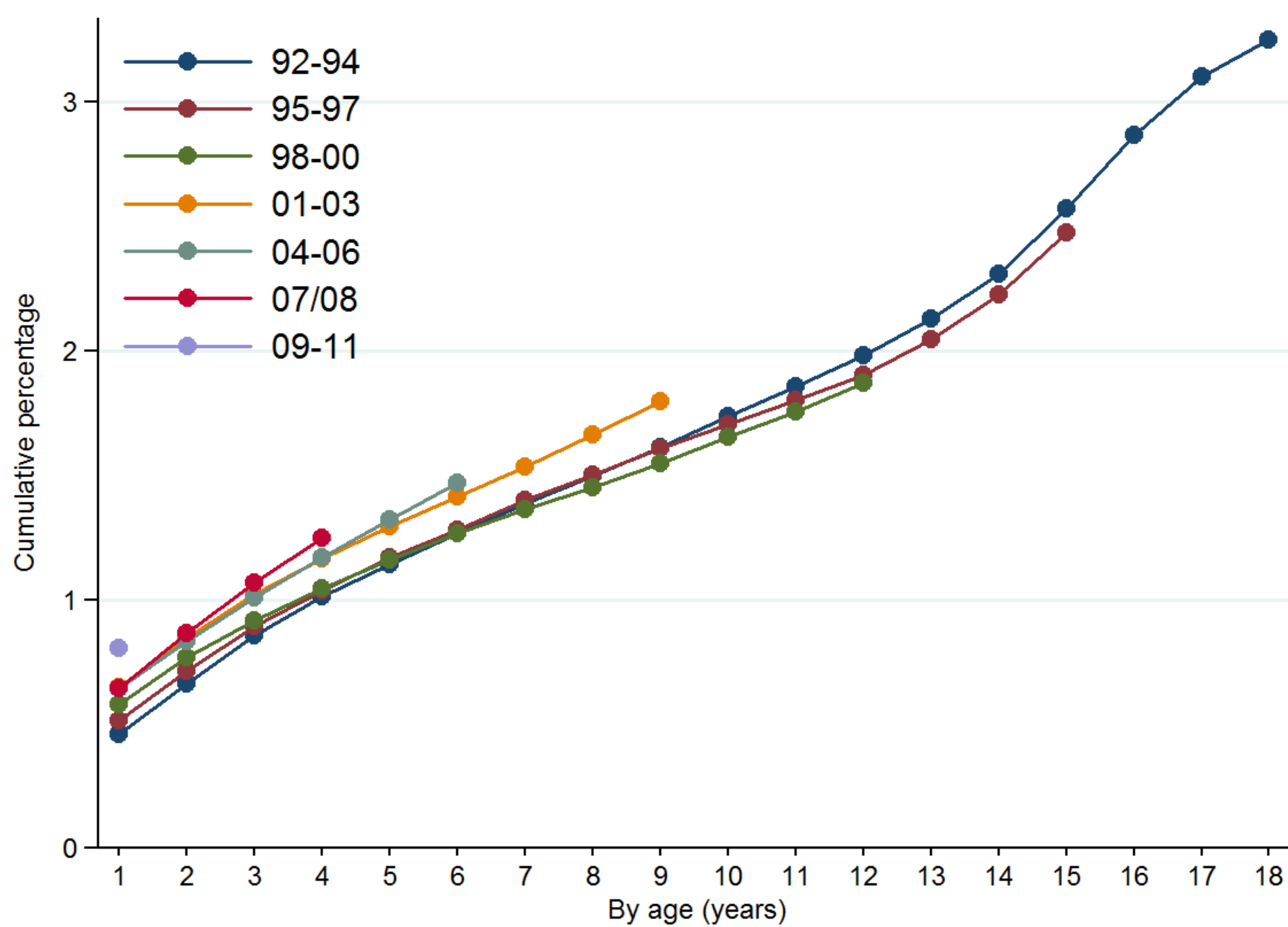
- A one-third sample of the national, looked-after child administrative dataset from Department for Education was analysed in this study.
- The data extract included all episodes of care from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1992 to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2012 for children born 1992 to 2011 (N=84,674).
- The cumulative proportion of children entering out-of-home care for the first time was calculated by age, gender, ethnicity and birth year.
- Changes over time in key characteristics of out-of-home care, namely setting, duration and stability, were also explored.

## Results

### What proportion of children enter out-of-home care?

- By age eighteen, 3.3% of children born 1992-94 had entered out-of-home care (Fig. 1).
- Between 1992 and 2012 the overall proportion of children entering care increased significantly e.g., 0.8% of children born 2009-11 vs. 0.5% born 1992-94 entered care by age one ( $p < 0.0001$ , Fig. 1).

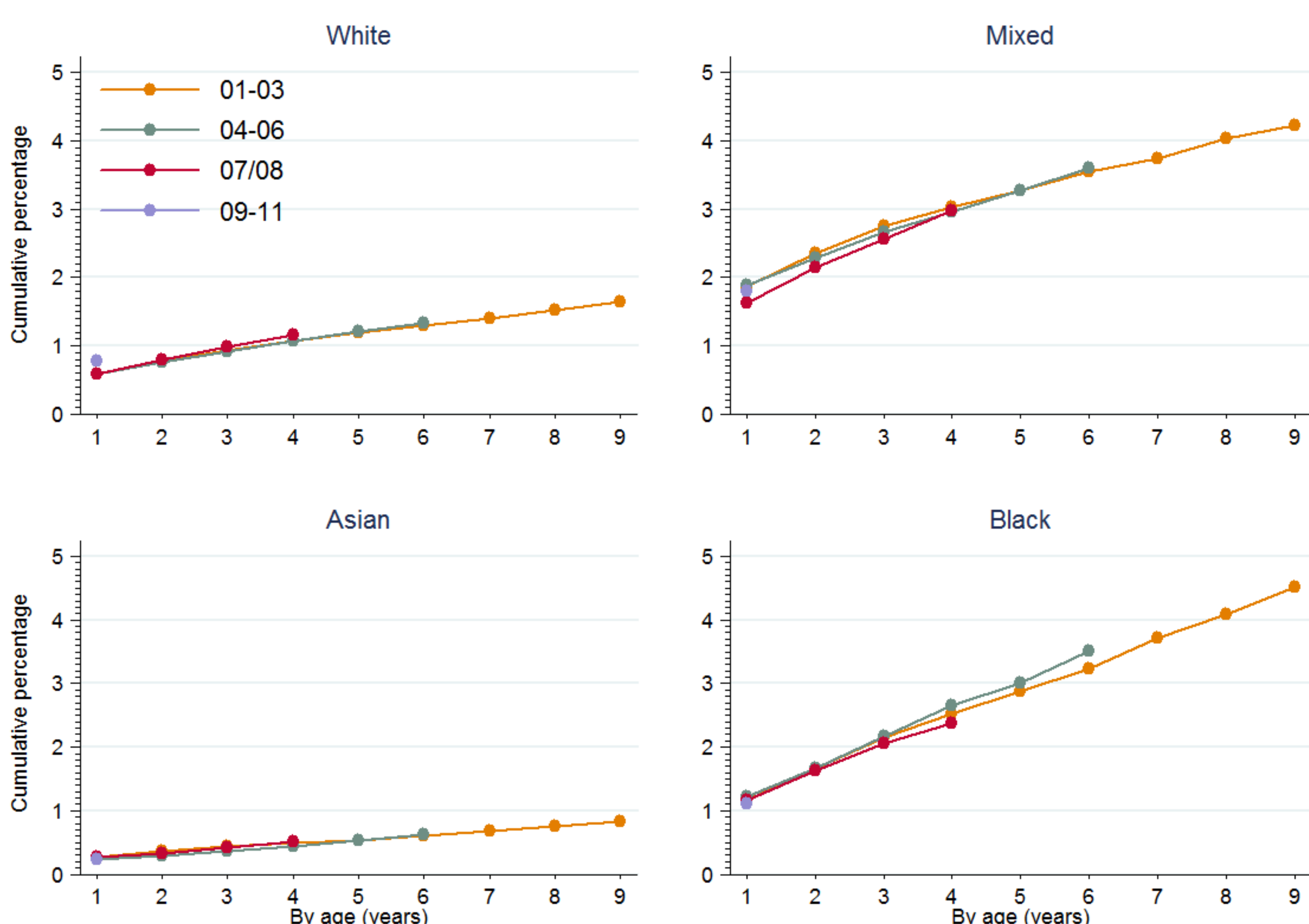
Figure 1: Cumulative percentage of children entering out-of-home care, by grouped year of birth



### How do rates of entry to care vary by ethnicity?

- Ethnic variation could only be explored for children born 2001-2011 as ethnicity was poorly recorded for children born 1992-2000 (<1% vs. 18.4% missing ethnicity respectively).
- Rates of entry to care by age nine were lower in White (1.6%) and Asian (0.8%) children compared with Mixed (4.2%) and Black (4.5%) children ( $p < 0.0001$ , Fig. 2).

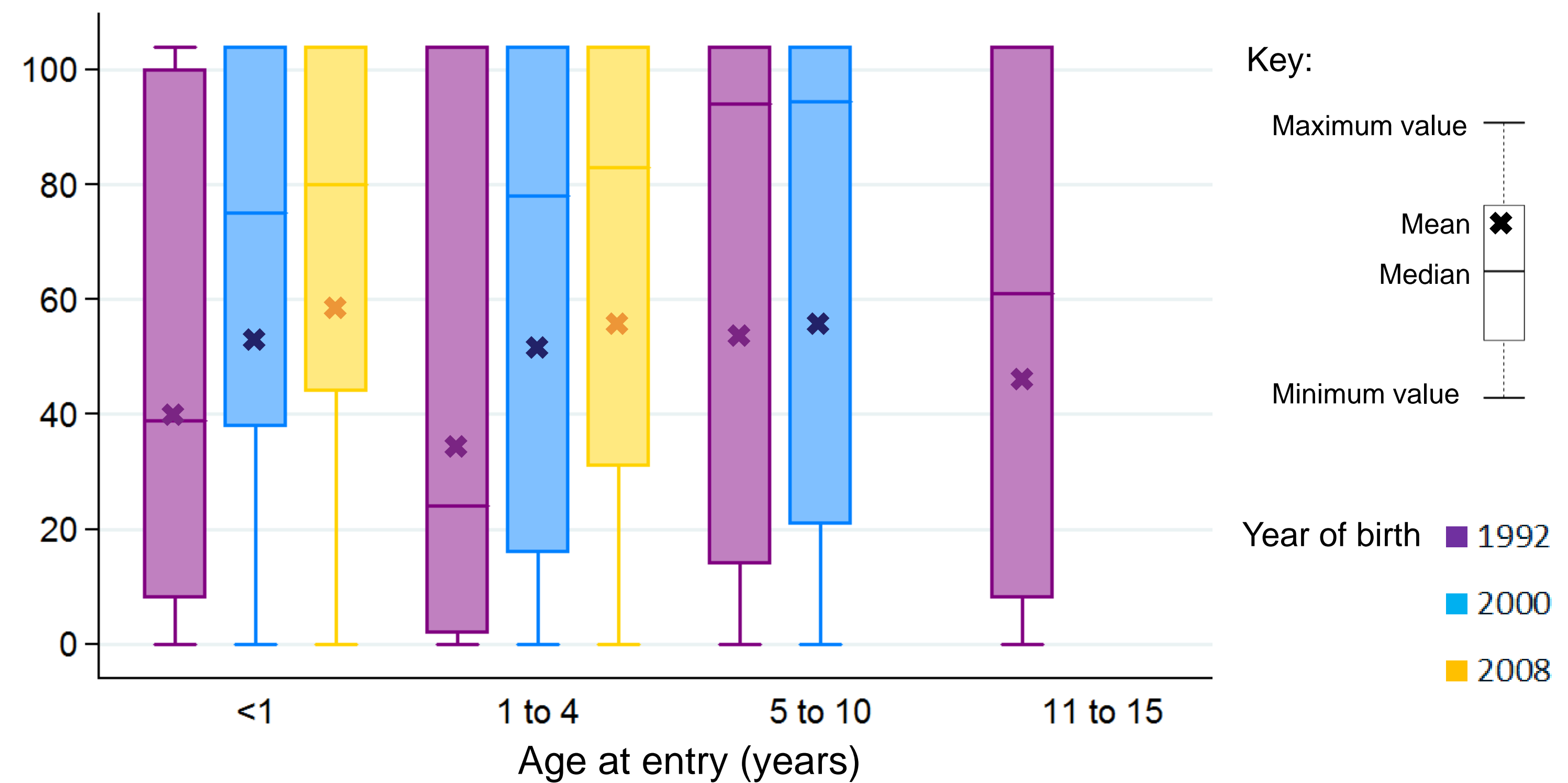
Figure 2: Cumulative percentage of children entering out-of-home care, by grouped year of birth and ethnicity



### How have the characteristics of care changed over time?

- Over time, children stayed in out-of-home care for longer (Fig. 3).

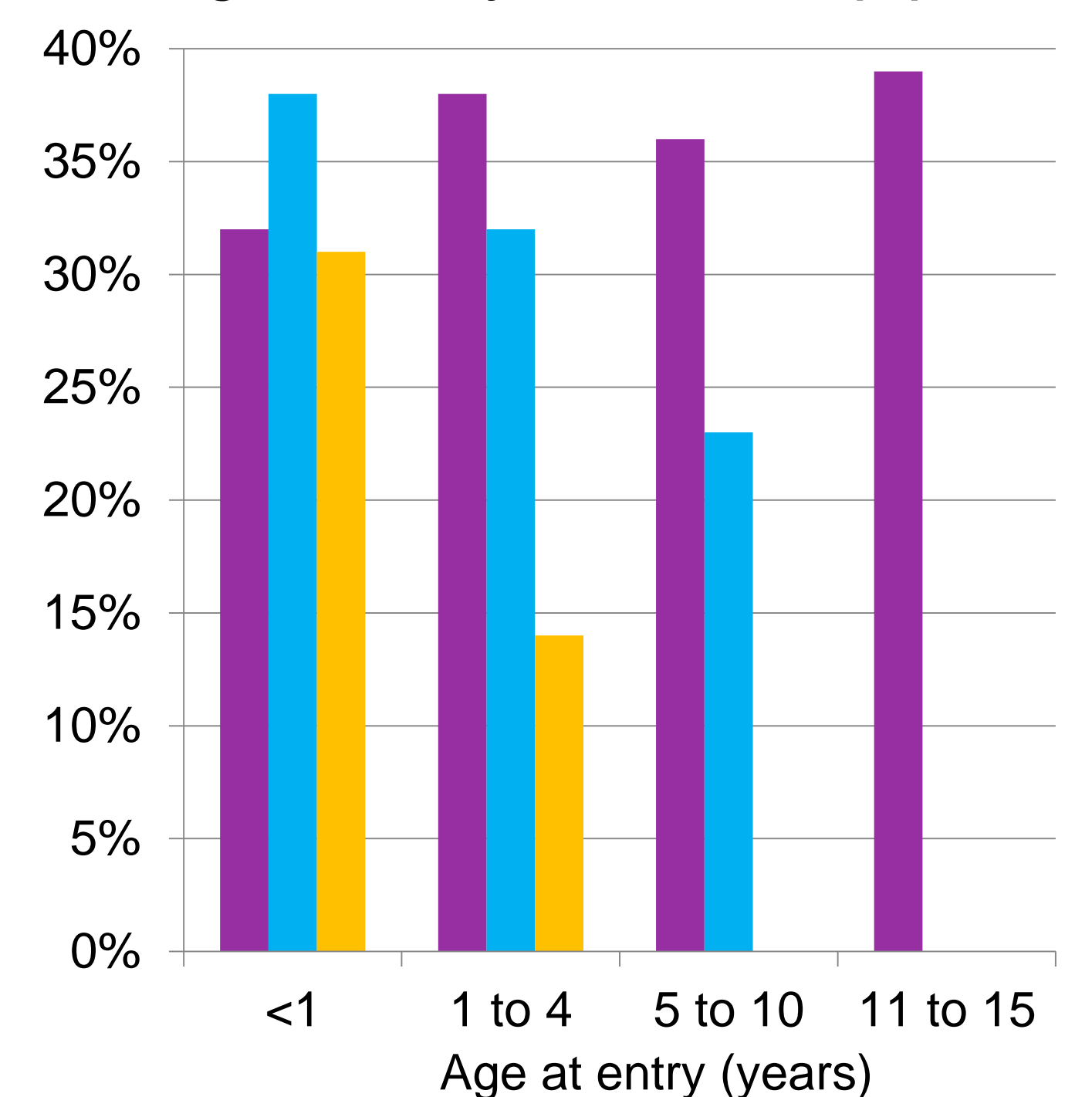
Figure 3: Weeks in out-of-home care in the two years following first entry



- For example, in a two year follow up period, the average number of weeks in care was 49 for infants born in 1992 and 70 for those born in 2008 ( $p = 0.01$ ).

Figure 4: More than one placement change in two year follow up period

- Stability of first placements has improved since 1992 (Fig. 4).
- For example, the proportion of 1 to 4 year olds with more than one placement change in a two year follow-up period declined from 39% to 14% ( $p < 0.001$ ).



## Conclusions

One in thirty children in England enter out-of-home care by age eighteen.

Children of Mixed and Black ethnicity are significantly more likely to enter care compared to White and Asian children.

Since 1992, the proportion of children entering out-of-home care has increased significantly.

Children are more likely to be placed in family type settings and first placements have become longer and more stable.

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