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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

Child Welfare Research Collaborative



Advancing  
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**Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare:  
Trends in Cook County for African American Children  
2008-2012**



# Disproportionality

- Disproportionality in the child welfare system occurs when the proportion of one group in the child welfare population (i.e., children in substitute care) is either proportionately larger (overrepresented) or smaller (underrepresented) than in the general population.
- In Illinois, African American children are disproportionately overrepresented in the child welfare system at a rate more than three times their proportion in the general population.

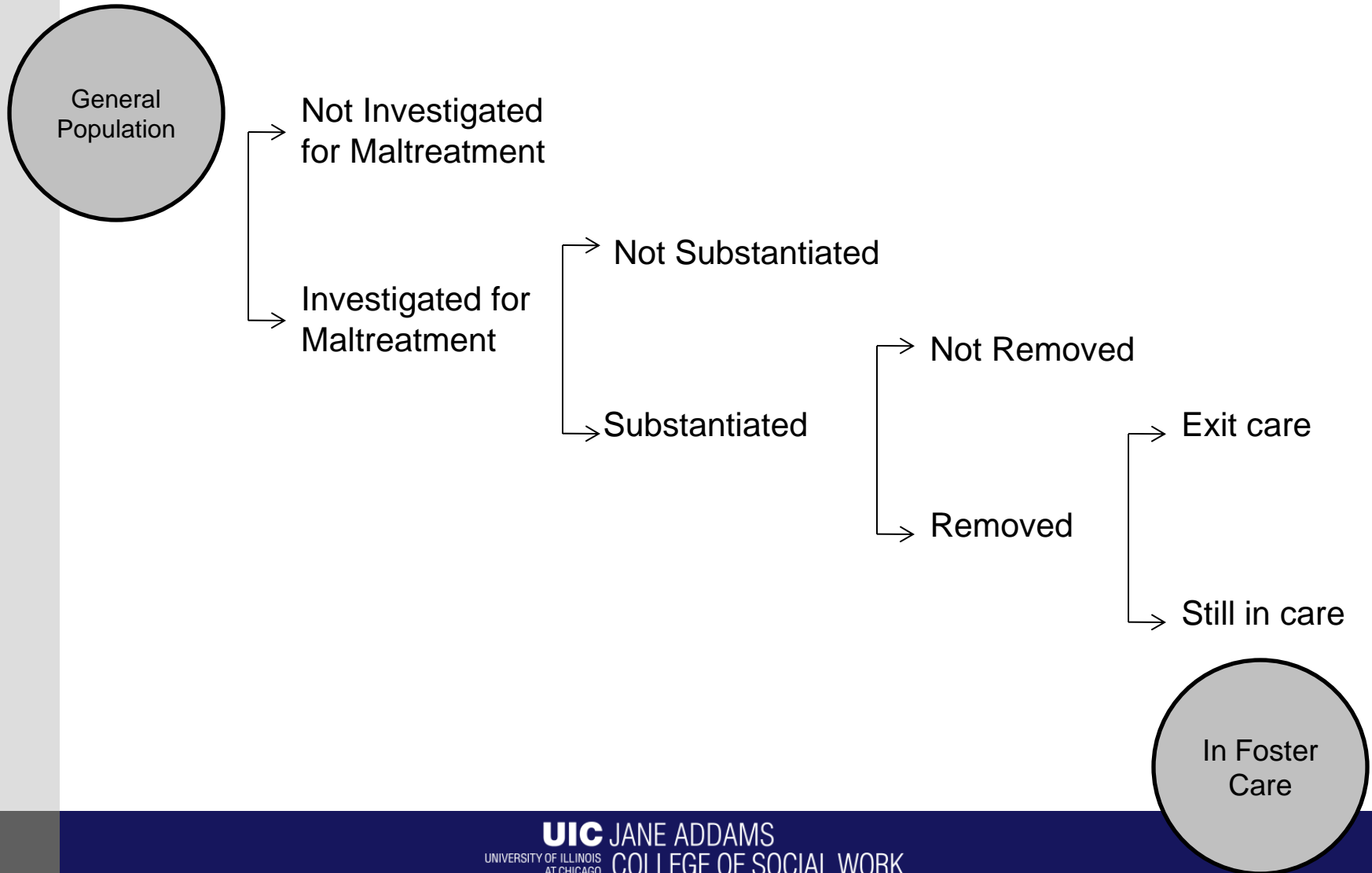
# Disparity

- While disproportionality refers to the state of being out of proportion, disparity refers to a state of being unequal.
- In the context of the child welfare system, disparity is typically used to describe differential treatment or outcomes experienced by one racial or ethnic group when compared to another racial or ethnic group (in contrast, disproportionality compares the proportion of one racial/ethnic group in the child welfare system to the same racial/ethnic group in the population).
- Disparities can occur at every decision-making point in the child welfare system, including the initial report that brings children to the attention of the system, substantiation of maltreatment, entries into substitute care, and exits from care.
- For example, if the rate of African American children being reported to the child welfare system in the state differed considerably when compared to the rate of White children being reported to the same system, this would denote a disparity.
- Ultimately, disparities that occur in both entries to the system and exits from the system produce disproportionality.

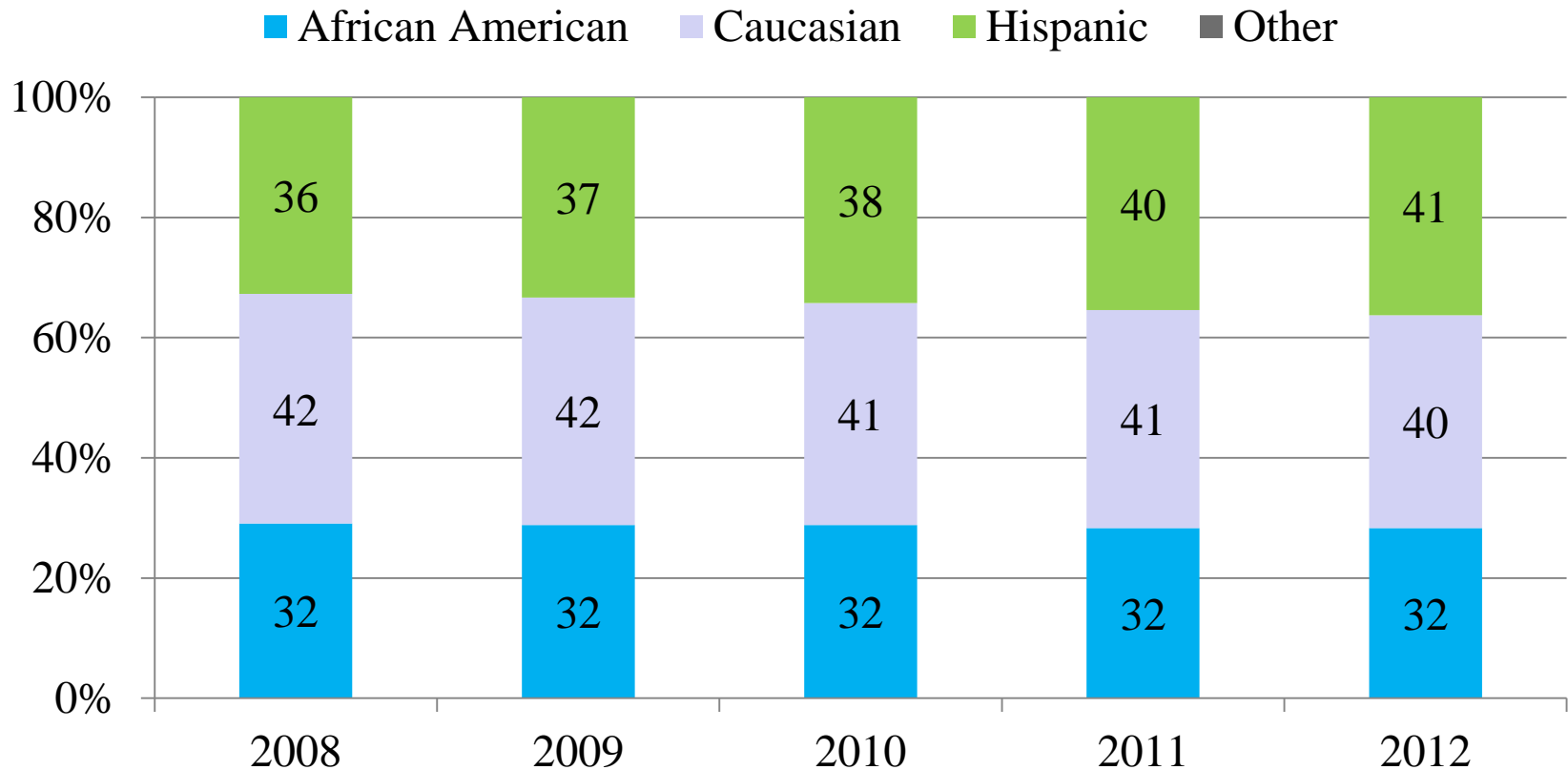
# Interpreting Disproportionality Ratios and Disparity Indices

- On the following pages we present a disproportionality ratio, providing an overall sense of disproportionality over the past five years, and then the disparity indices at each decision point (discussed in the next section).
- Disproportionality ratios and disparity indices are plotted on a logarithmic scale for ease of interpretation.
- Disproportionality ratios less than 1.0 represent underrepresentation of a racial group relative to its composition in the region, while values greater than 1.0 represent overrepresentation.
- Disparity indices less than 1.0 represent decreased odds relative to the comparison group, while values greater than 1.0 represent increased odds relative to the comparison group.
- In addition, we display the percent of children involved at each of the stages so that the reader has a general sense of the trends in the overall makeup of the children at each decision point.

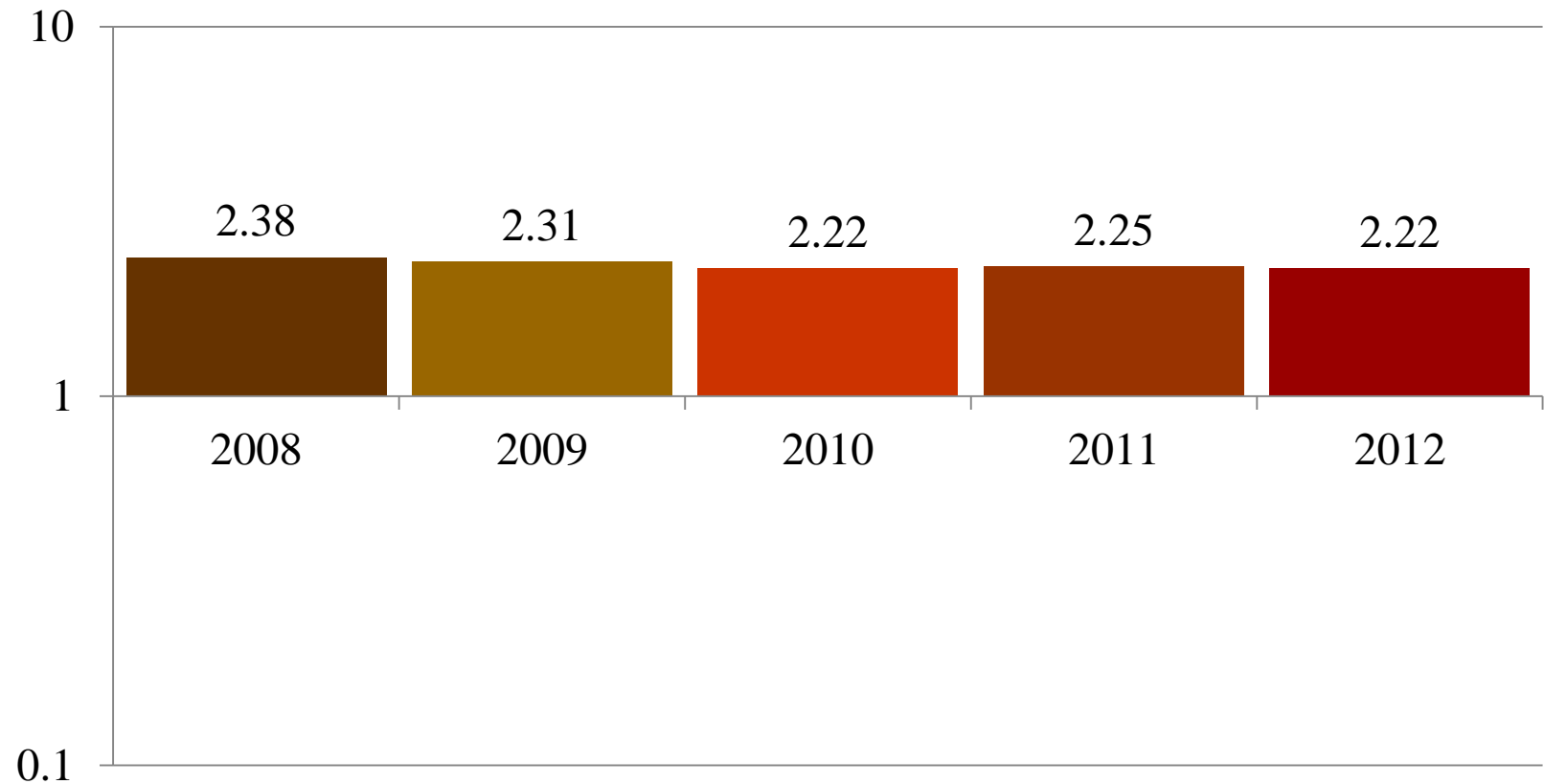
# Key Decision Points



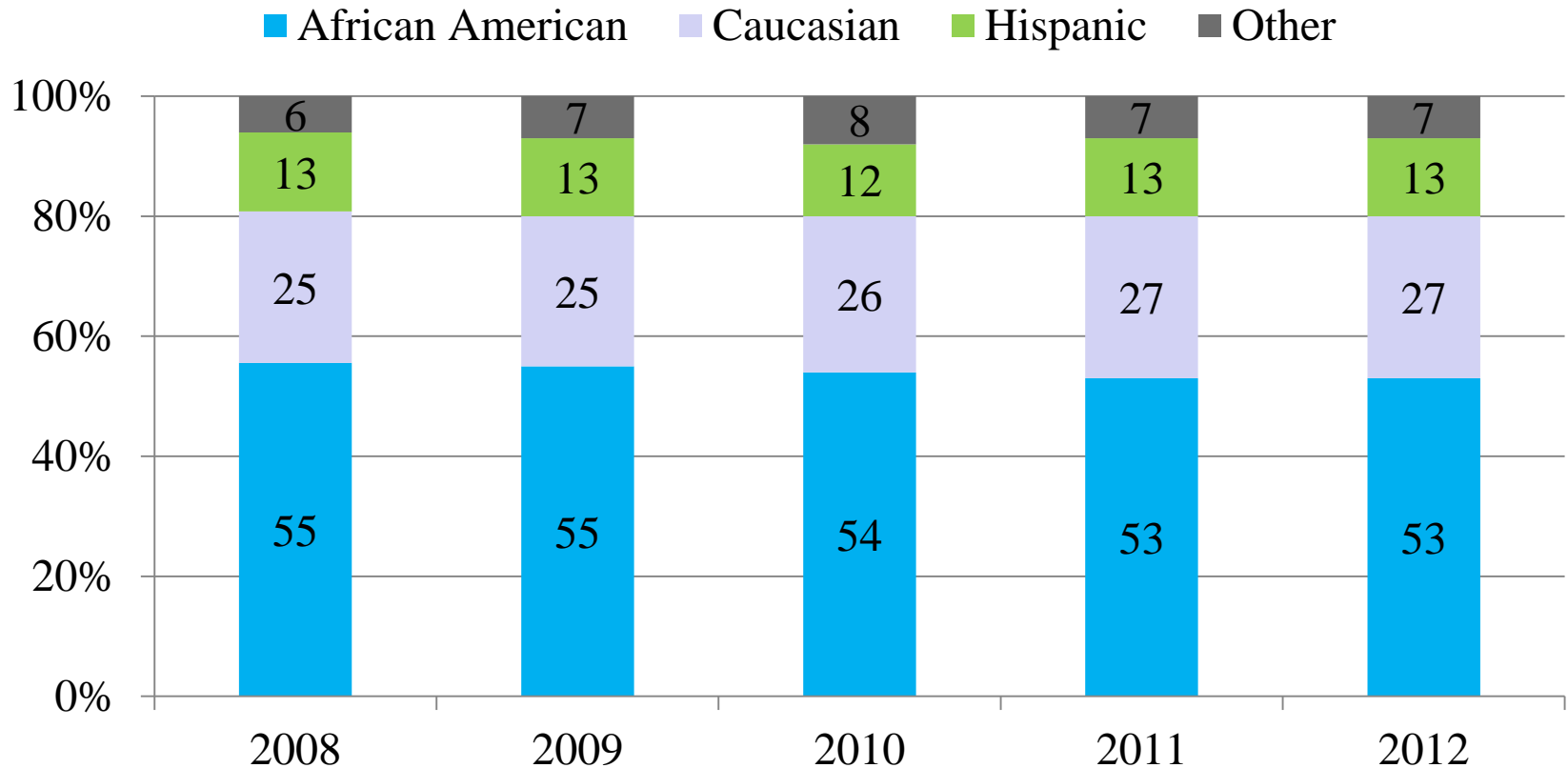
# Census Data: Cook



# Disproportionality Ratios for African American Children: 2008-2012 Cook



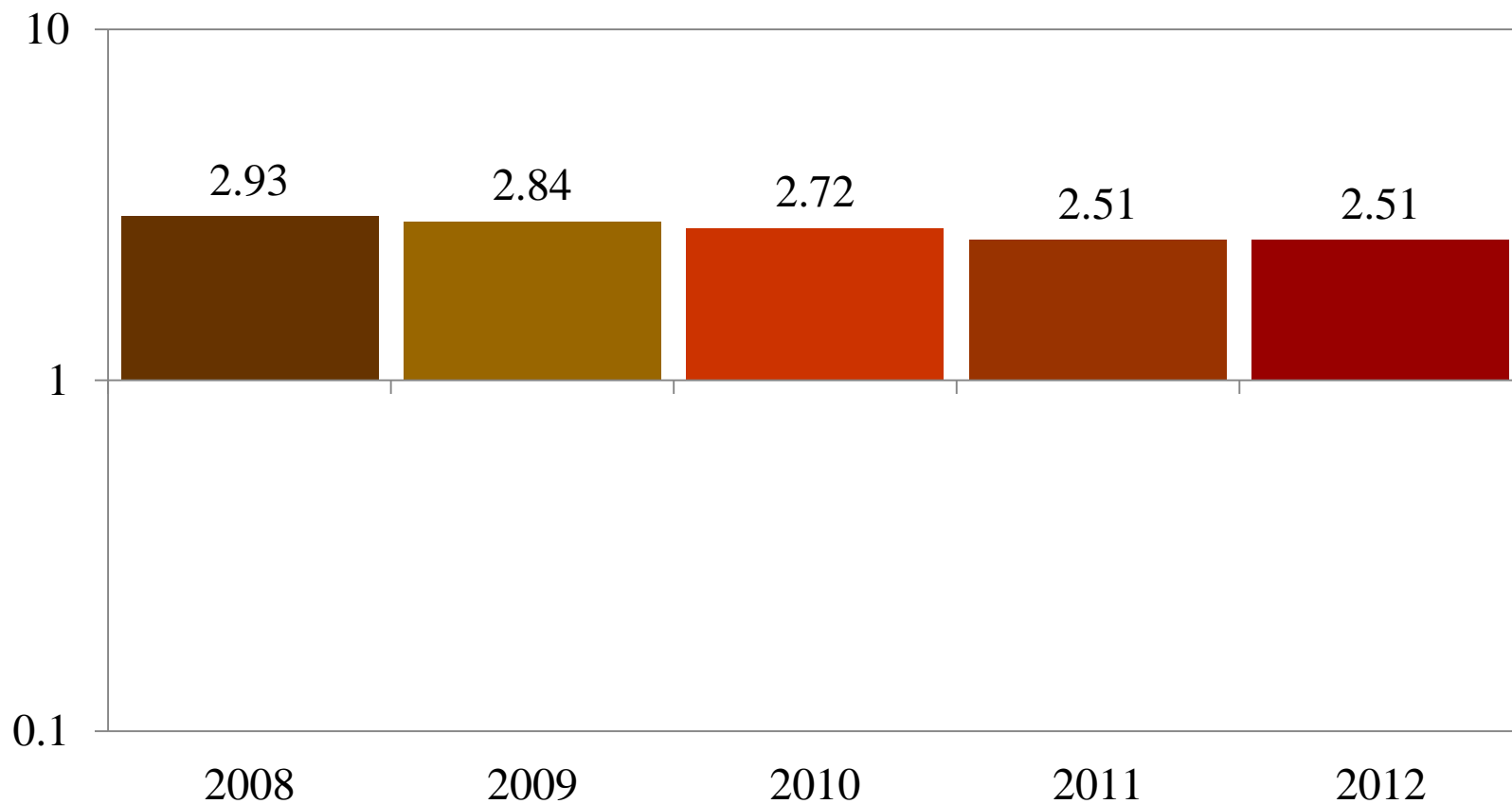
# Children Investigated for Maltreatment : Cook



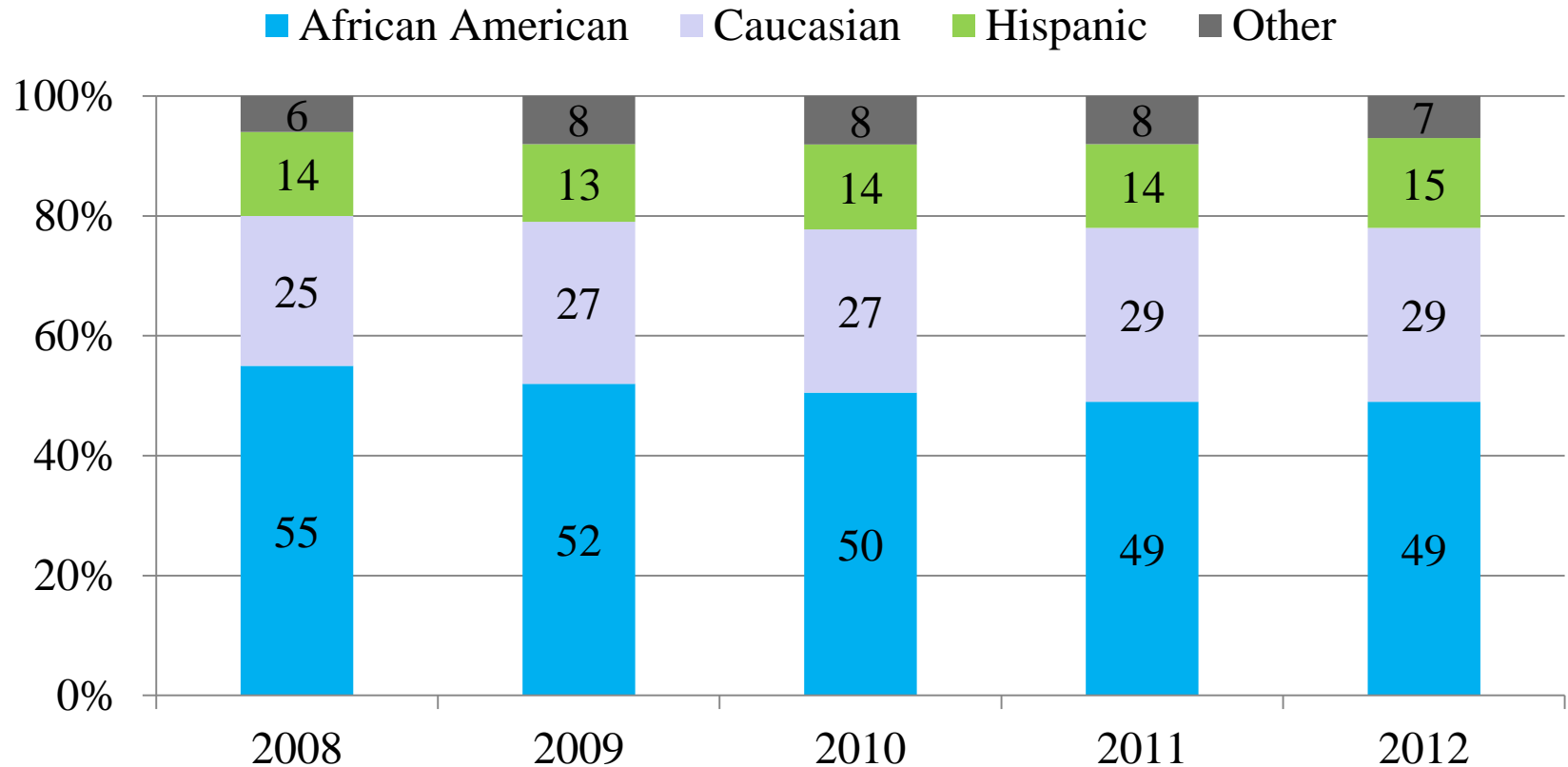


# Disparity for Investigated Reports: 2008-2012 Cook Region

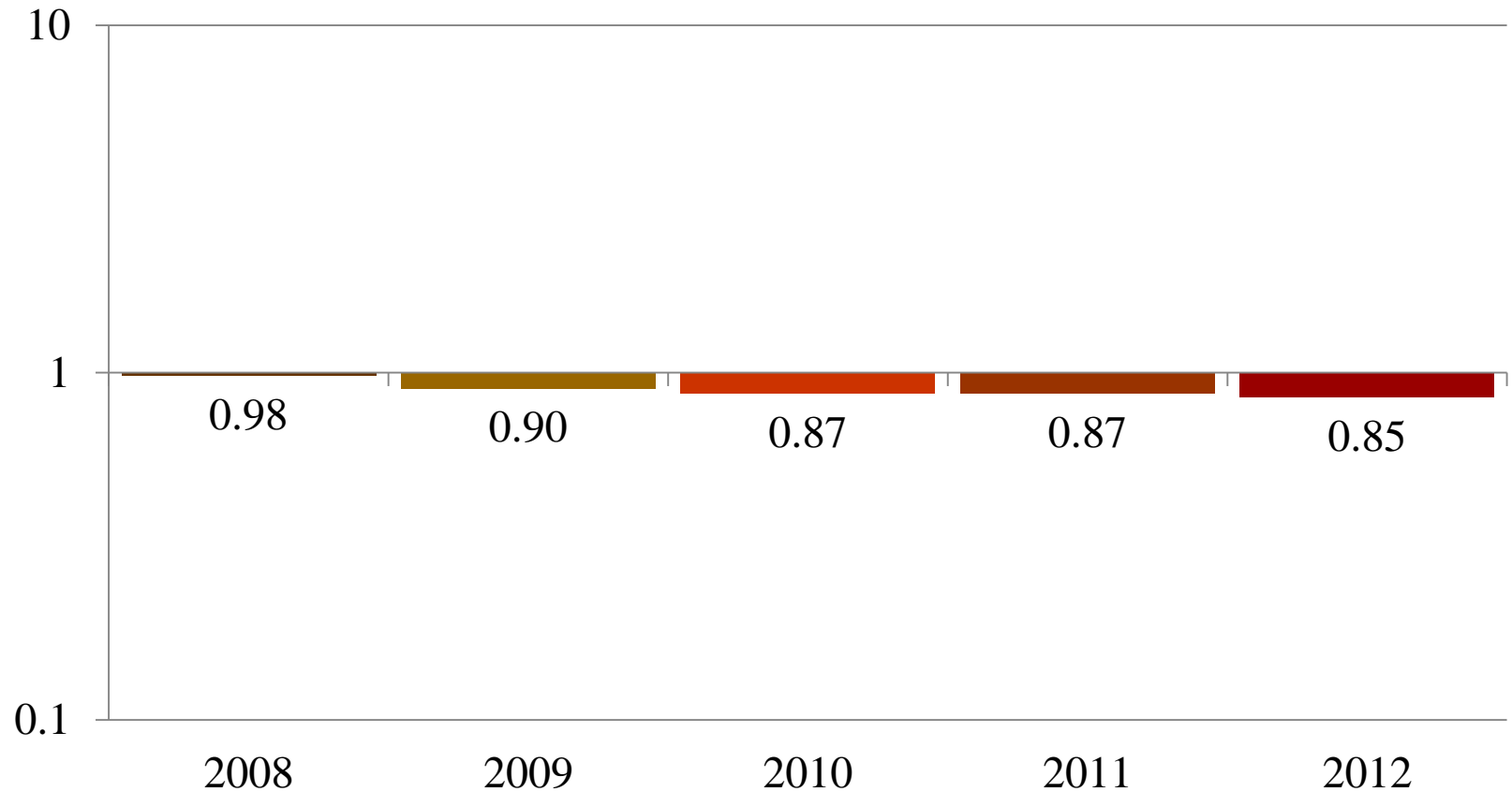
(African American to White)



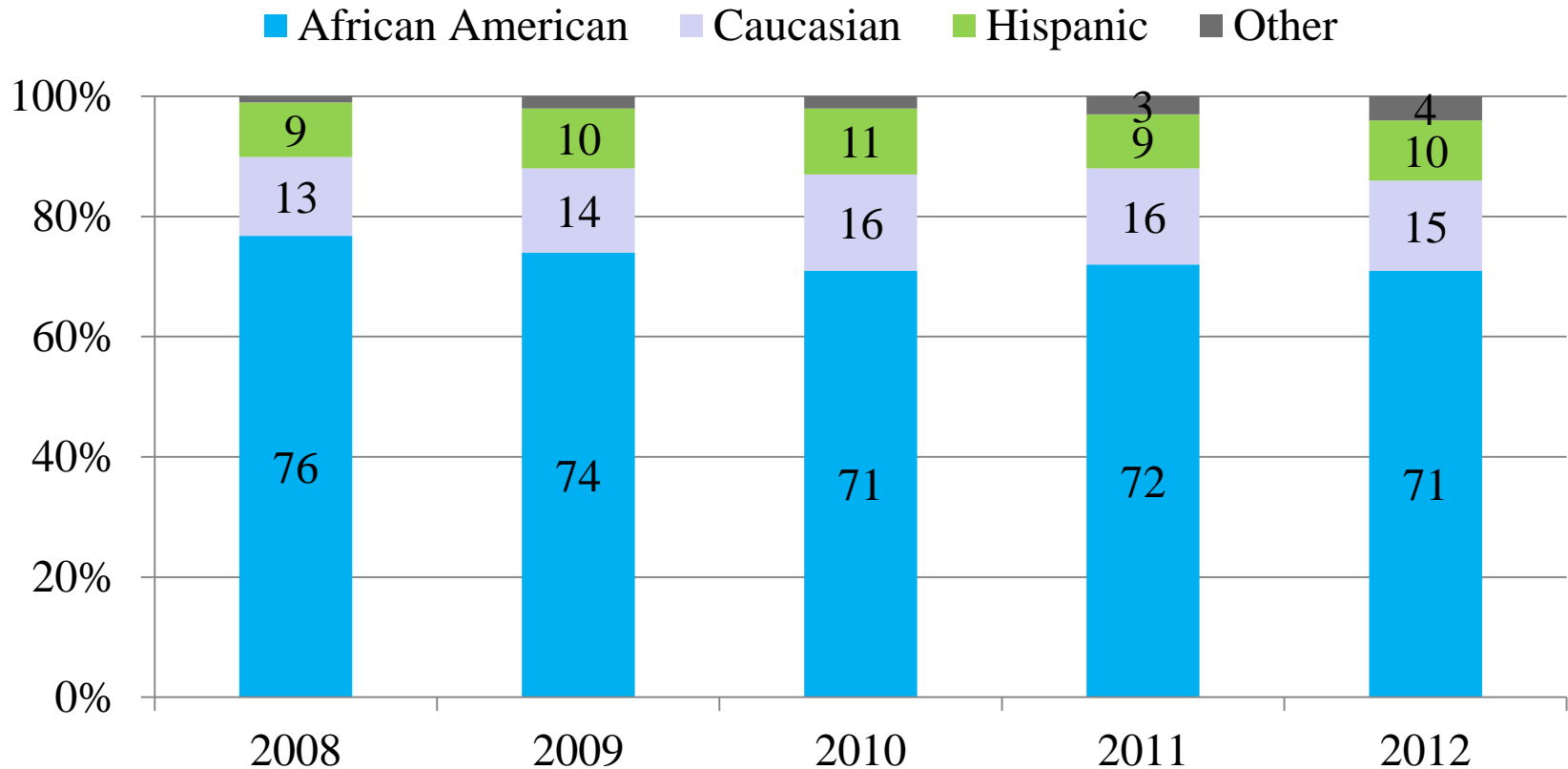
# Children Indicated for Maltreatment : Cook



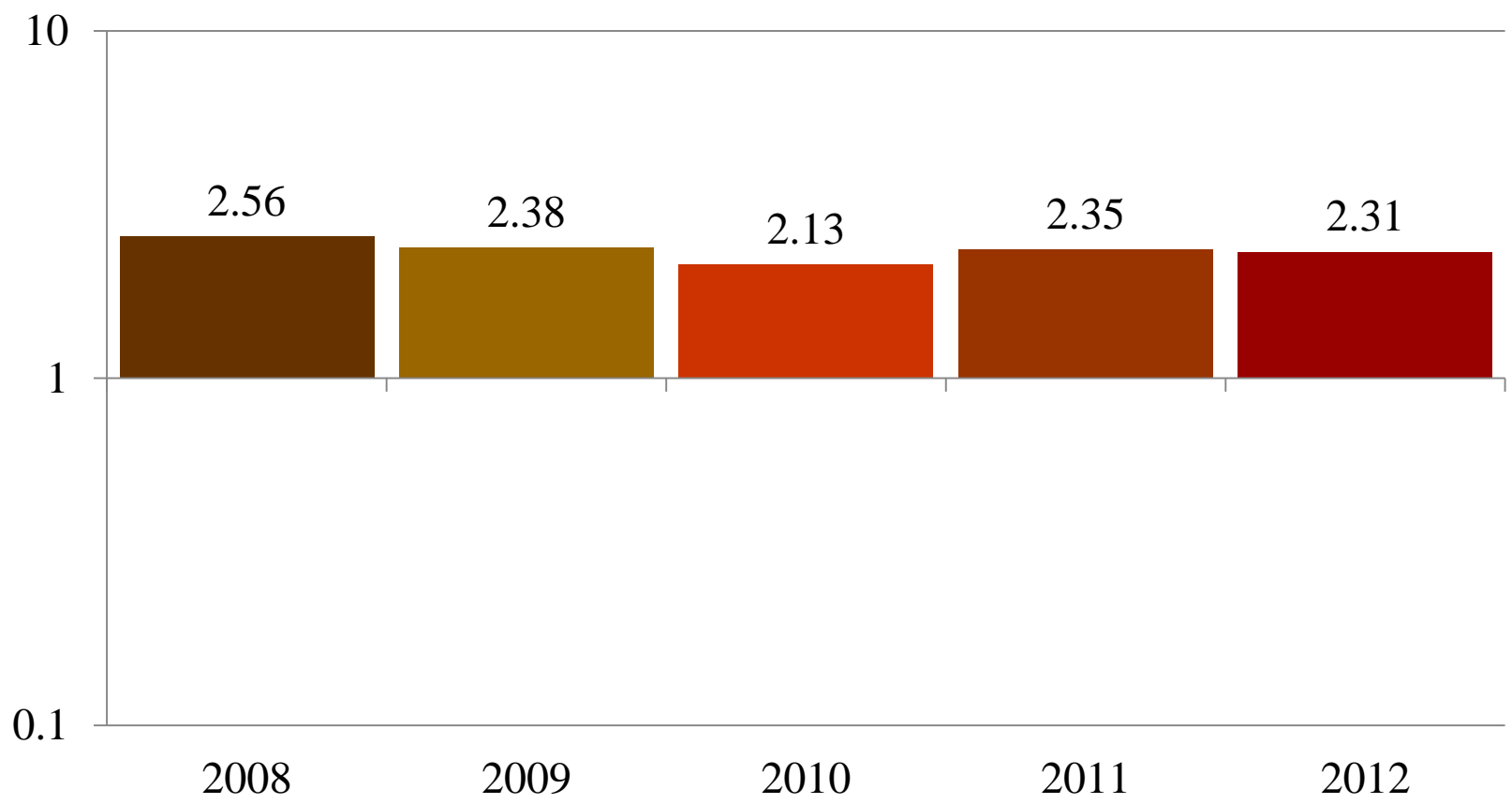
# Disparity for Indicated Reports: 2008-2012 Cook Region (African American to White)



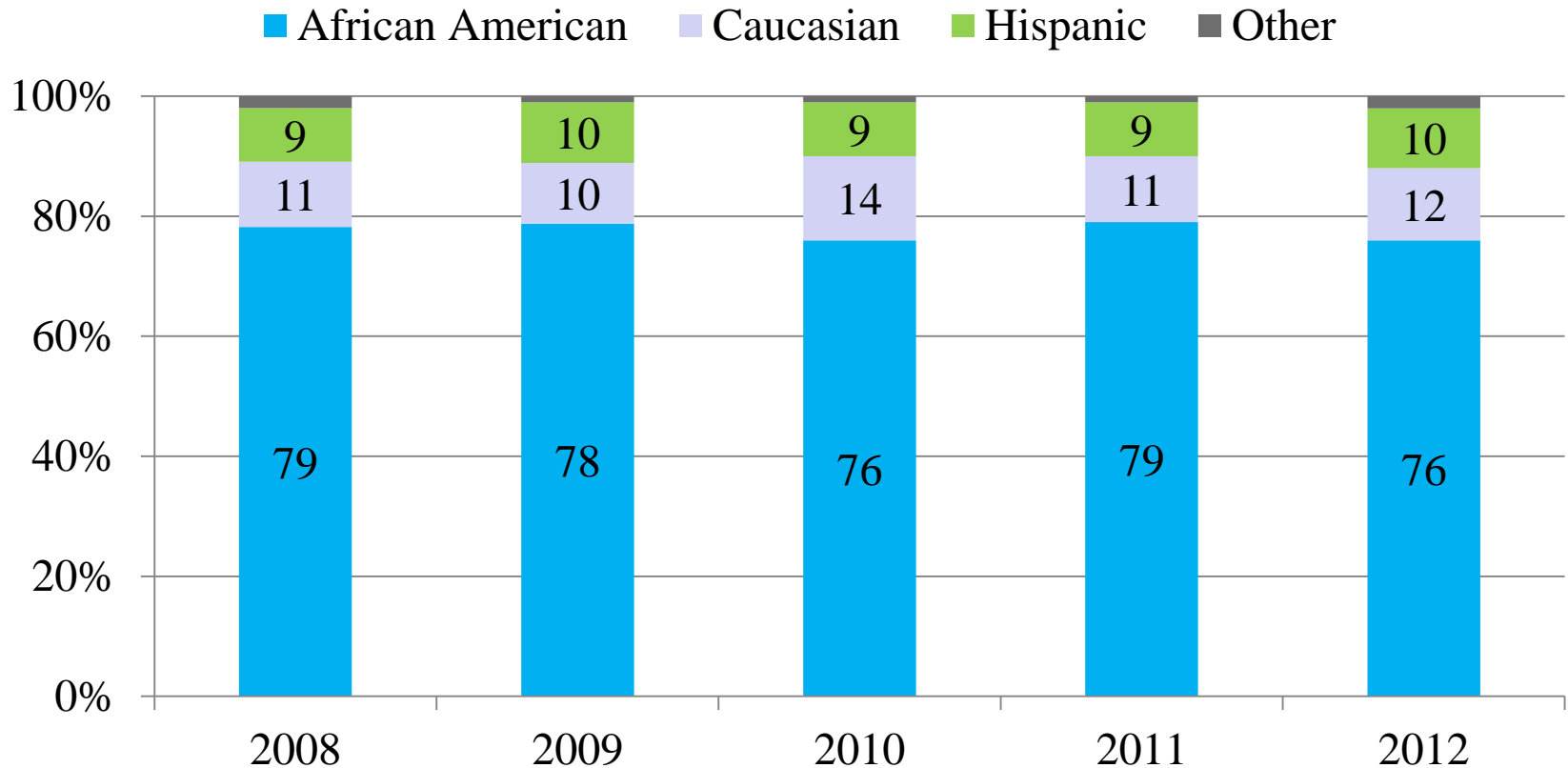
# Children Entered Care: Cook



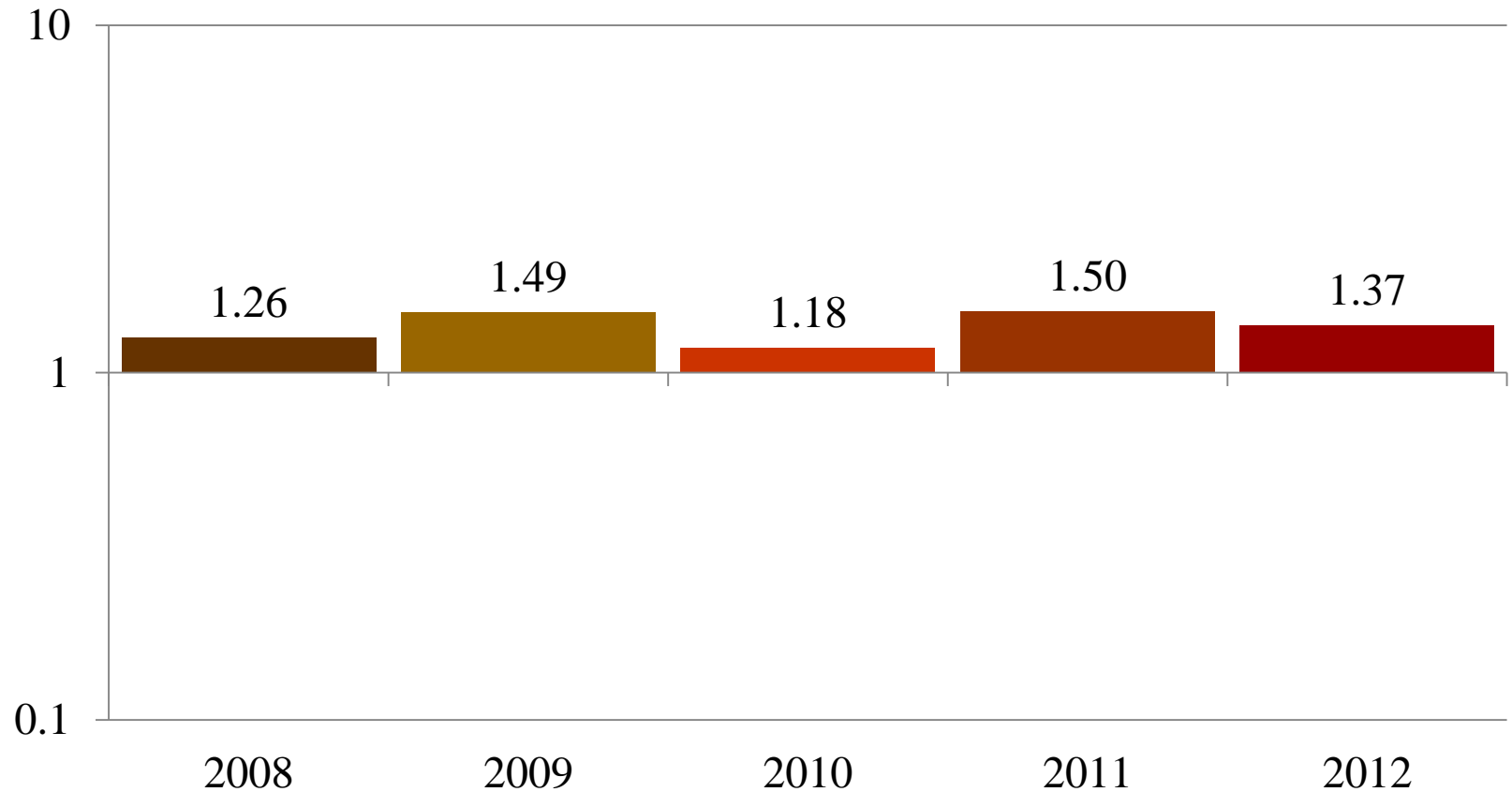
# Disparity for Children Entering Substitute Care: 2008-2012 Cook Region (African American to White)



# Children in Long Term Foster Care: Cook



# Disparity for Children in Substitute Care Longer than 36 Months: 2008-2012 Cook Region (African American to White)



# Contact Information

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