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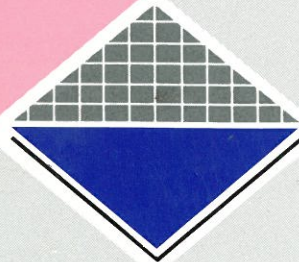
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**Adoptions  
Australia  
1990-91**

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**Katherine Wilkinson  
Graham Angus**

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**



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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE  
CHILD WELFARE SERIES  
Number 1

# **Adoptions**

# **Australia**

# **1990–91**

Katherine Wilkinson  
Graham Angus

Australian Government Publishing Service  
Canberra

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# Preface

This report was prepared by Katherine Wilkinson and Graham Angus of AIHW.

The use of information from the article 'Adoption Law in Australia' compiled by Belinda Stonehouse and published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies is acknowledged.

This publication, compiled for the first time by AIHW, continues the series previously titled *Adoptions: national data collections* and issued by the Social Welfare Administrators according to standards established under the former WELSTAT project (Standardisation of Social Welfare Statistics Project).

WELSTAT was established by the Social Welfare Ministers in 1976 with the aim of developing standards for the collection of national statistics in a range of welfare areas and to assess the adequacy of existing statistical systems.

## Symbols used

The following symbols are used in the tables of this report:

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable
- n.a. not available.

# Summary

- 1,142 adoptions orders were made in the year 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991. This represented a decrease of 12% from the previous year and a decrease of 66% since 1979–80.
- The majority of adoptions were by non-relatives (76%), with adoptions by step-parents accounting for 22% and by other relatives 2%.
- Of the children adopted by non-relatives, 66% were aged under one year. 75% of children adopted by relatives were aged between 5 and 14 years.
- 45% of children adopted by non-relatives were born overseas. Of these, 66% were girls.

# 1 Introduction

This publication presents adoption statistics provided by State and Territory welfare departments for the period 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991. These statistics cover all finalised adoptions notified to State/Territory welfare departments, and all children legally available for adoption during that year.

The data provided by State/Territory departments were collated according to definitions and explanatory notes set out in *Adoption Standards* dated March 1982 and agreed to by the States, Territories and the Commonwealth. The definitions used are shown in *Explanation of terms* on page 24 of this publication. Data for years prior to 1987–88 are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication *Adoptions, Australia* (Catalogue 4406.0).

The report attempts to present data across Australia according to standardised definitions and counting rules. However, the tables and figures in this report are based on the data provided—which are dependent on factors such as the scope and completeness of data collection, reporting procedures, policy guidelines and judicial requirements of the particular State or Territory. These factors may affect the comparability of data across States and Territories.

# 2 Adoptions in Australia

## Introduction

In Australia each State and Territory has responsibility for adoptions. In some States adoptions can only be arranged through the department responsible, while in others they can also be arranged through non-government agencies. In New South Wales and Western Australia adoptions by relatives can be arranged through solicitors.

In recent years the emphasis in adoptions has changed from the placement of children, particularly those born ex-nuptially, to being a service for children; the top priority is now the welfare of the child.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a major shift in attitudes to secrecy. In the past, various State legislations were based on the premise that secrecy protected all parties. Recent practice around Australia is for a register to be provided allowing adopted children and their birth relatives to make contact.

The predominant features of adoption in Australia over the past two decades have been the considerable increase in adoptions of overseas-born children and the dramatic decline in the number of children available for adoption from within Australia. The latter has resulted from the generally declining birthrate, especially among the younger generation, due mainly to the increased incidence of contraception and abortion; and a more relaxed attitude and greater financial assistance to single mothers wanting to retain their children.

## Adoptions by relatives

The majority of adoptions by relatives are in fact adoptions by step-parents, to incorporate children into the new marriage. It should be noted that these adoptions do not involve as significant a change in the situation of the child as do other adoptions.

Relatives other than parents are given preference over non-relatives in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. However, in South Australia, adoptions by relatives other than parents are being discouraged as they sever existing legal relationships and are not considered to be in the best interests of the child; guardianship is preferred. In the Australian Capital Territory, specific adoption consent can be given to a close relative.

In New South Wales, private solicitors may organise applications for formal adoptions by step-parents without notifying the Department of Community Services when the custodial parent remarries. The Supreme Court validates these adoptions but cannot readily provide the information in the form required for the purposes of this collection. Hence, the figures on children adopted by parents through solicitors are not included. Adoptions by non-parental relatives may be granted by the Department in special circumstances, as was the case during 1990–91.

Changes to adoption legislation in Victoria in 1987 have resulted in orders for adoption by a relative being granted only under exceptional circumstances in that State. Guardianship and custody orders through the family court are regarded as more appropriate in the majority of situations. With all relative/spouse applications a report to court must be made by Community Services Victoria.

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1. Stonehouse B (1992) *Adoption Law in Australia*. Australian Family Briefings No. 1, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Victoria.



In Queensland, adoptions by relatives other than parents are special cases—such as where the natural parents are unable to care for the child through illness or other causes, or where the parents have died and made legal provision for the care of the child in this event. Such cases are few in number, and each is carefully assessed on its merits to determine the child's best interests.

In Western Australia the only adoption agency is the Department for Community Development. Adoptions by relatives may be arranged privately and processed through solicitors, and in 1990–91 most of the adoptions by parents and three of the four adoptions by non-parent relatives were arranged in this way.

## **Adoptions by non-relatives**

A child is legally available for adoption by non-relatives if all the necessary consents to the child's adoption have been obtained or dispensed with. Nearly half of adoptions by non-relatives are 'Inter-country adoptions'.

A couple wishing to adopt a child must satisfy the department or agency that they will be suitable parents. Generally, only married couples are allowed to adopt non-relative children, although persons in de facto relationships are eligible in New South Wales and South Australia. Other factors considered in the assessment of potential parents are their age, health, reasons for wanting to adopt, and marital stability.

In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, adoptions by persons not related to the child may be arranged by either the authorised department or an approved adoption agency. In Queensland, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, all adoptions must be arranged through the authorised department. In Western Australia in 1990–91, there was one adoption by a non-relative that was arranged privately.

## **Inter-country adoptions**

The substantial increase in the number of adoptions of children born overseas has occurred since the mid-1970s, and has involved children predominantly from Asian countries. The process has been strictly controlled by the Federal Government and State Government under the *Federal Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* and adoption acts in each State/Territory. The Commonwealth Government is responsible for investigating and approving overseas adoption programs and requires that there be a suitable central agency in the overseas country that will administer the program in accordance with Australian standards.

At the present time there is still a considerable waiting list for adoptions of overseas-born children, and the 1990–91 statistics in this publication do not indicate any decline in the number of inter-country adoptions. There are changing attitudes to inter-country adoptions in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recommends inter-country adoption only if children cannot be suitably placed or cared for in their own country. For instance, Korea, which provided the majority of children for adoption in 1990–91 in Australia, is no longer accepting applications, and the Philippines government will only accept applications from couples who have a Filipino background or who have previously adopted a child from that country. There is also evidence that there are now more adoption programs operating in overseas countries and that more children are being adopted in the country of their birth.

## **Guardianship**

Children under guardianship are not regarded as adoptees, although some may be included in the count of children legally available for adoption. Placing children under guardianship is preferred to their being adopted by non-parent relatives as it does not sever existing legal family relationships.

### 3 Scope and coverage

The data in this publication include all adoptions approved by State/Territory welfare departments during the year ended 30 June 1991, and all children legally available for adoption at 30 June 1991. The publication excludes data on adoptions by parents in New South Wales (see *Adoptions by relatives* on page 3) and children legally available for adoption in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

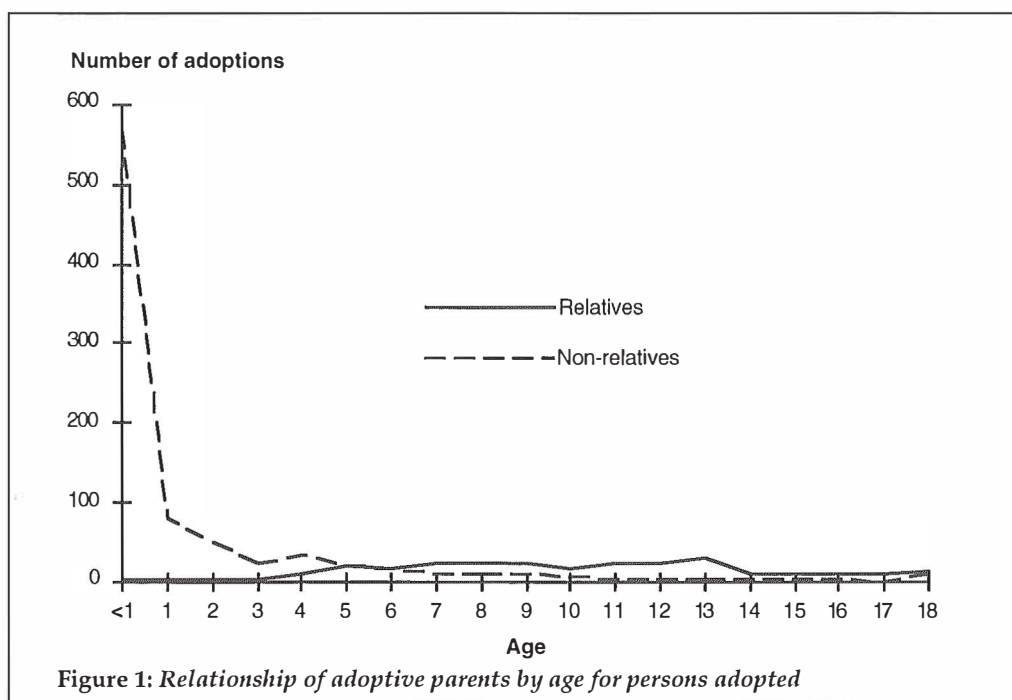
# 4 Adoptions 1990–91

## All adoptions

During 1990–91 there were 1,142 adoptions orders made. This was a decrease of 152 (12%) from the previous year.

The majority (76%) of adoptions were by non-relatives (865), with adoptions by relatives accounting for 277 (24%) (Table 1).

Almost all persons adopted by relatives were adopted by step-parents (253 out of 277), and were mostly aged between 5 and 14 years (208). Only four persons adopted by relatives were aged under one year. This is in marked contrast to the ages of persons adopted by non-relatives, with 569 out of 865 (66%) being under one year old (Figure 1)(Table 3).



Most adoptions (84%) were arranged through State/Territory welfare departments. In Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory all adoptions were arranged in this way. Of the 132 adoptions arranged by non-government organisations (12% of total adoptions), all except one were adoptions by non-relatives (Table 2).

Western Australia and New South Wales are the only States/Territories in which adoptions by relatives can be arranged through private individuals; these adoptions are processed through solicitors. In 1990–91 there were 55 adoptions arranged in this way in Western Australia; no data were available for New South Wales.

**Table 1: Persons adopted: arranging body by relationship of adoptive parents, 1990–91**

Arranging body	Relatives			Non-relatives	Total
	Parents <sup>(a)</sup>	Other relatives	Total		
State/Territory	201	21	22	733	955
Non-government organisation	1	–	1	131	132
Other <sup>(b)</sup>	51	3	54	1	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>1,142</b>

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales.

(b) Arranged privately and legalised through solicitors.

## Adoptions by relatives

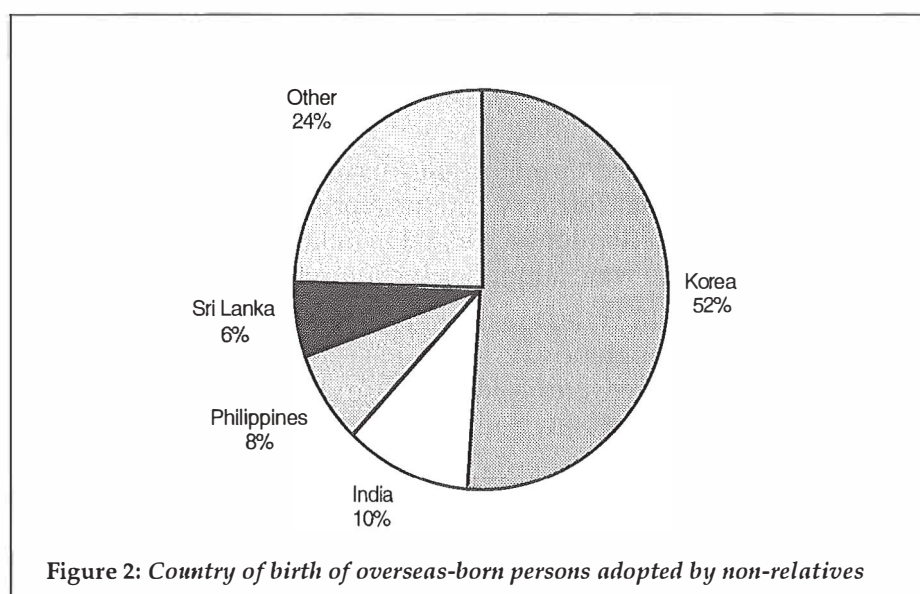
Twenty-four percent of the 1,142 adoptions in Australia in 1990–91 were by relatives, mainly step-parents. However, the proportion of relative adoptions in Queensland and Western Australia was much higher, 45% and 59% respectively. Relative adoptions in these two States totalled 175, or 63% of all relative adoptions in Australia. In both States the majority (around 80%) of persons adopted by relatives were aged between 5 and 14 years. (Table 5). The majority (222 or 80%) of adoptions by relatives were arranged through State/Territory welfare departments (Table 1).

## Adoptions by non-relatives

### Australian-born and overseas adoptees

Of the 865 persons adopted by non-relatives, 393 (45%) were born overseas. Of these, 258 were girls and 135 were boys. For Australian-born persons adopted by non-relatives, more boys (260) than girls (212) were adopted (Table 7).

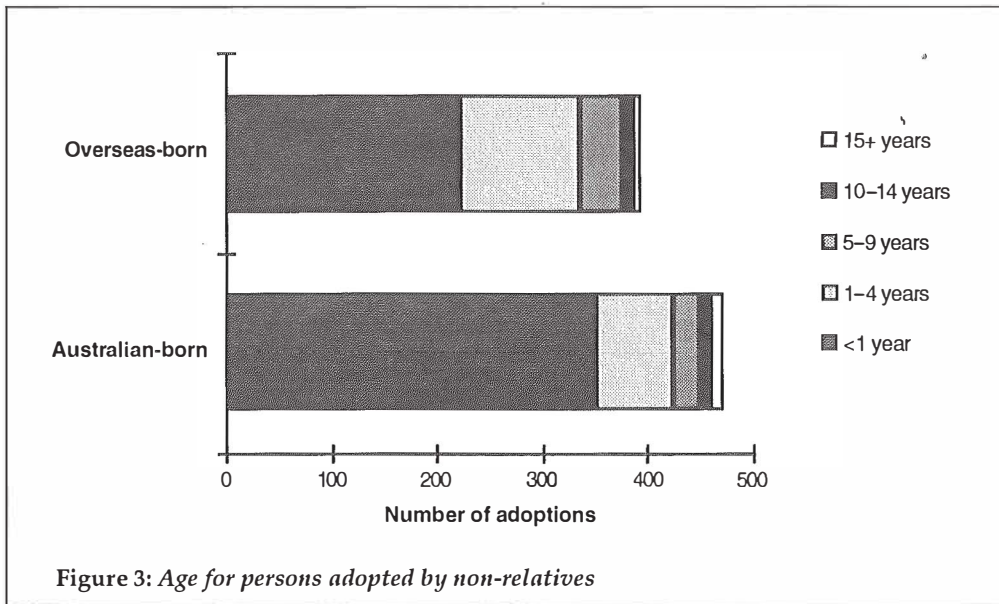
Of the 393 adoptions from overseas, the majority (203) were born in Korea, representing 52% of overseas adoptions, with 41 born in India being the next largest category (10% of overseas-born adoptees).



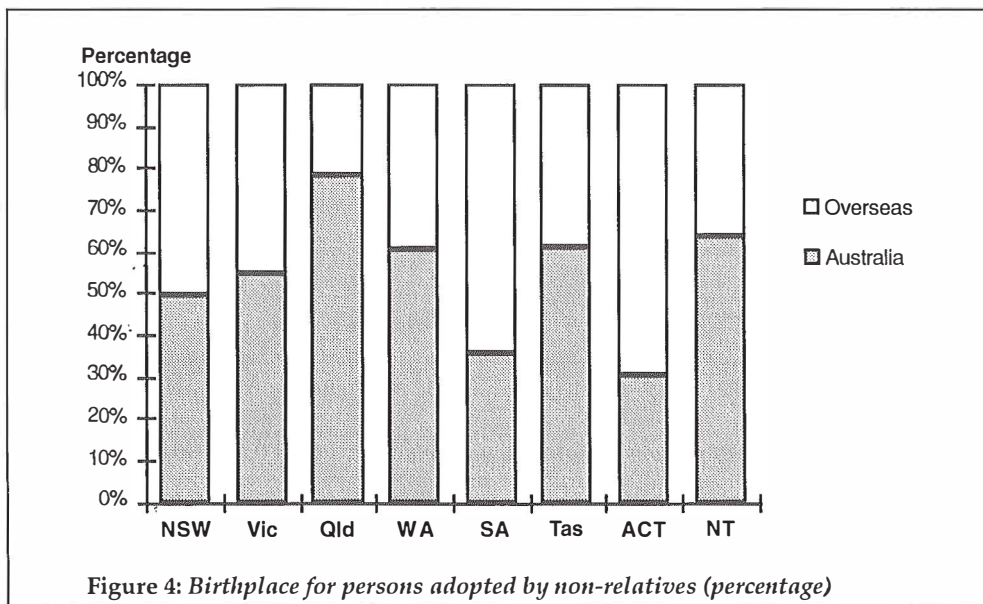


Of the adoptions of overseas-born persons, more girls than boys were adopted in all States and Territories. Adoptions from Korea and India—the countries from which most overseas adoptions came—involved nearly three times as many girls as boys.

There was a marked difference between the ages of Australian-born and overseas-born adoptees, with 74% of Australian-born children being under one year of age compared with only 56% of overseas-born children under that age (Table 6).



The proportion of adoptees born overseas varied markedly between States and Territories, with Queensland having only 22% compared with 70% in the ACT (although only 16 overseas adoptions in total), 64% in South Australia and 51% in New South Wales (Figure 4)(Table 8).



New South Wales received 102 (50%) of the 203 Korean persons adopted in Australia and all persons adopted from Cambodia (10). Victoria adopted 25 of the 41 (61%) persons from India and 9 of the 11 Fijians. This pattern reflects the process of adoption in Australia, with an agency establishing contacts in a particular country and generally dealing with prospective parents in its State or Territory (Table 7).

### Age of adoptees by State/Territory

Almost all persons adopted by non-relatives in the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory were under one year old, whereas only 65% of adoptees in the States were that age. Less than half of persons adopted in Western Australia and South Australia were under one year old (Table 9).

### Nuptiality of Australian-born adoptees

The majority (84%) of adoptions of Australian-born persons to non-relatives involved an ex-nuptial child (397 out of 472), with 170 (36% of the total) relinquished by unmarried mothers aged 19 or under, and an equal percentage (36%) being relinquished by unmarried mothers in their twenties (Figure 7)(Table 10).

## Changes over time

The number of adoptions fell from 3,337 in 1979–80 to 1,142 in 1990–91. This is a decrease of 66%, and continues the decline evident since 1971–72 when 9,798 adoptions were registered (Figure 8)(Table 12). The omission of adoptions by parents from the New South Wales figures since 1987–88 exaggerates this decline (there were 254 adoptions by parents and other relatives in NSW in 1984–85, the most recent year for which data were available) (Table 14).

Adoptions by relatives have decreased dramatically in recent years, from 1,637 in 1979–80 (the earliest figure available) to 277 in 1990–91. This represents a decline from 49% of all adoptions to 24% (Figure 10)(Table 14).

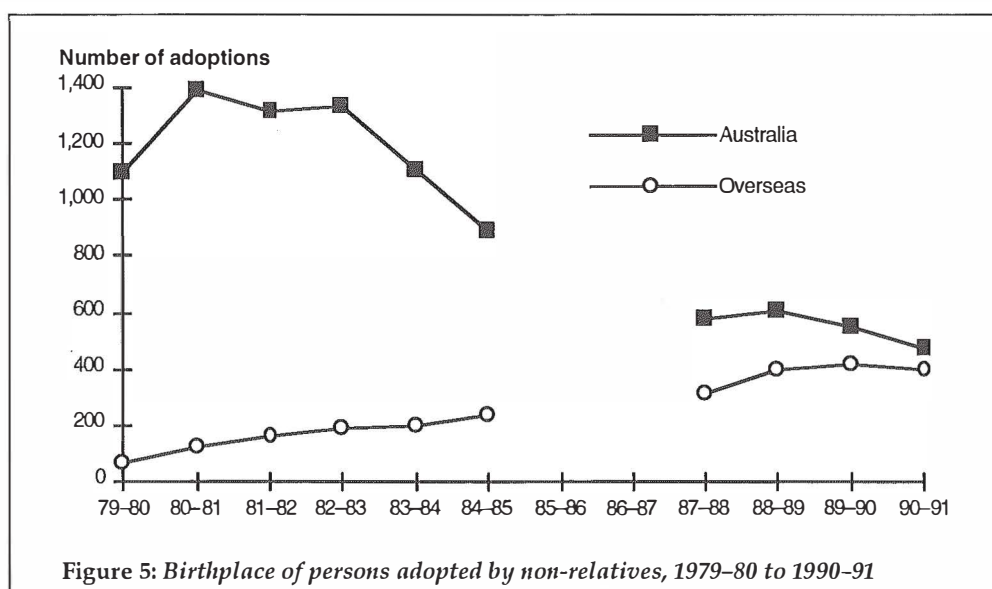


Figure 5: Birthplace of persons adopted by non-relatives, 1979-80 to 1990-91

Adoptions by non-relatives decreased by 835 (49%) since 1979–80. This decline comprised two contrasting movements—a fall from 1,388 to 472 (66%) in Australian-born persons adopted and an increase from 127 to 393 (209%) in the overseas-born component.

The number of adoptions arranged through government agencies has decreased since 1979–80, from 1,909 to 955. Adoptions by other means has also decreased from 1,428 to 187. Government agencies now arrange 84% of adoptions compared to 57% in 1979–80 (Figure 9)(Table 13).

The number of children available for adoption by non-relatives decreased substantially, from 356 at 30 June 1988 to 88 at 30 June 1991 for the four States/Territories for which data were provided (NSW, WA, ACT and NT). In percentage terms the decline was particularly marked in Western Australia, which recorded a fall of 83%. In these four States/Territories only 7 children available for adoption were living in foster homes at 30 June 1991 compared with 71 three years earlier (Table 18).

## 5 Detailed tables

Table 2: Persons adopted: relationship to adoptive parents and arranging body by State/Territory, 1990–91

Relationship/Arranging body	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>Parents</b>									
Government	–	25	93	25	29	20	2	7	201
Non-government	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	51	–	–	–	–	51
Total	(b)	26	93	76	29	20	2	7	253
<b>Other relatives</b>									
Government	9	–	2	1	7	–	–	2	21
Non-government	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	3
Total	9	–	2	4	7	–	–	2	24
<b>Non-relatives</b>									
Government	278	174	115	55	51	26	23	11	733
Non-government	42	58	–	–	16	15	–	–	131
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
Total	320	232	115	56	67	41	23	11	865
<b>Total</b>									
Government	287	199	210	81	87	46	25	20	955
Non-government	42	59	–	–	16	15	–	–	132
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	55	–	–	–	–	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1,142</b>

(a) Arranged privately and legalised through solicitors.

(b) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales.

Table 3: Persons adopted: age by relationship to adoptive parents and sex, 1990–91

Age	Adopted by relatives <sup>(a, b)</sup>			Adopted by non-relatives			Total		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Under 1 year	3	1	4	258	311	569	261	312	573
1–4 years	10	11	21	83	104	187	93	115	208
5–9 years	52	52	104	33	34	67	85	86	171
10–14 years	51	53	104	9	13	22	60	66	126
15 years and over	24	20	44	12	8	20	36	28	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>1,142</b>

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales.

(b) There were 12 males and 12 females adopted by relatives other than parents; four under 1 year, seven 1–4 years, four 5–9 years, seven 10–14 years and two 15 years and over.

✓ Table 4: Persons adopted by relatives: State/Territory by sex, 1990–91

State/Territory	Sex		Persons
	Males	Females	
NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	5	4	9
Vic	20	6	26
Qld	45	50	95
WA	41	39	80
SA	16	20	36
Tas	9	11	20
ACT	1	1	2
NT	3	6	9
<b>Australia</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>277</b>

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales

✓ Table 5: Persons adopted by relatives: age by State/Territory, 1990–91

Age	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<1 year	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4
1–4 years	2	1	2	13	2	–	–	1	21
5–9 years	2	6	37	32	7	12	2	6	104
10–14 years	1	8	41	30	15	7	–	2	104
15+ years	–	11	15	5	12	1	–	–	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>277</b>

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales.

✓ Table 6: Persons adopted by non-relatives: country of birth by age, 1990–91

Country of birth	Age (years)					Total
	Under 1	1–4	5–9	10–14	15 and over	
Australia	348	75	26	9	14	472
<b>Overseas</b>						
Brazil	6	4	–	–	–	10
Cambodia	9	–	1	–	–	10
Fiji	1	6	4	–	–	11
Hongkong	2	6	2	–	1	11
India	12	16	9	3	1	41
Korea	152	40	8	1	2	203
Philippines	6	12	4	6	2	30
Sri Lanka	11	12	1	–	–	24
Thailand	1	7	6	1	–	15
Other overseas	21	9	6	2	–	38
Total overseas	221	112	41	13	6	393
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>865</b>



Table 7: Persons adopted by non-relatives: country of birth by State/Territory and sex, 1990-91

Country of birth	NSW		Vic		Qld		WA		SA		Tas		ACT		NT		Australia		Persons
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Australia	84	74	65	62	52	38	19	15	15	9	17	8	3	4	5	2	260	212	472
<b>Overseas</b>																			
Brazil	4	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	7	3	10
Cambodia	3	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	7	10
Fiji	-	-	6	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	4	11
Hongkong	1	1	-	4	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	7	11
India	-	5	8	17	-	2	1	4	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	11	30	41
Korea	30	72	8	29	3	5	5	9	4	11	-	12	4	8	1	2	56	148	203
Philippines	5	5	3	3	2	3	-	-	4	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	15	15	30
Sri Lanka	4	7	1	4	-	-	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	15	24
Thailand	1	1	2	1	-	2	-	-	3	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	9	15
Other overseas	8	8	5	8	3	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	18	20	38
Total overseas	56	106	34	71	10	15	8	14	19	24	1	15	6	10	1	3	135	258	393
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>865</b>

M = males F = females

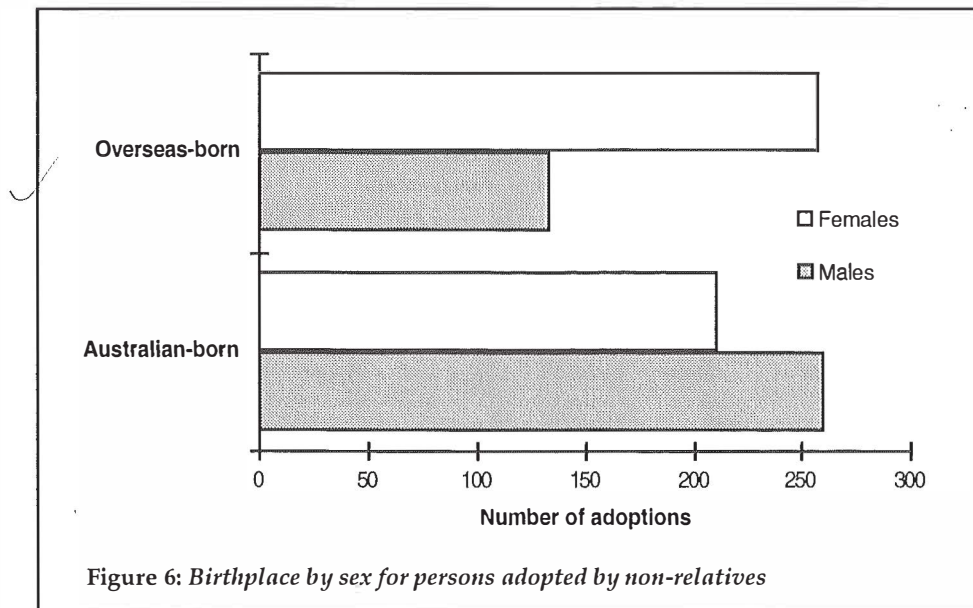


Figure 6: Birthplace by sex for persons adopted by non-relatives

Table 8: Persons adopted by non-relatives: State/Territory by birthplace, 1990-91

State/Territory	Australia		Overseas		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
NSW	158	49.4	162	50.6	320	100
Vic	127	54.7	105	45.3	232	100
Qld	90	78.3	25	21.7	115	100
WA	34	60.7	22	39.3	56	100
SA	24	35.8	43	64.2	67	100
Tas	25	61.0	16	39.0	41	100
ACT	7	30.4	16	69.6	23	100
NT	7	63.6	4	36.4	11	100
<b>Australia</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>45.4</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9: Persons adopted by non-relatives: age by State/Territory, 1990-91

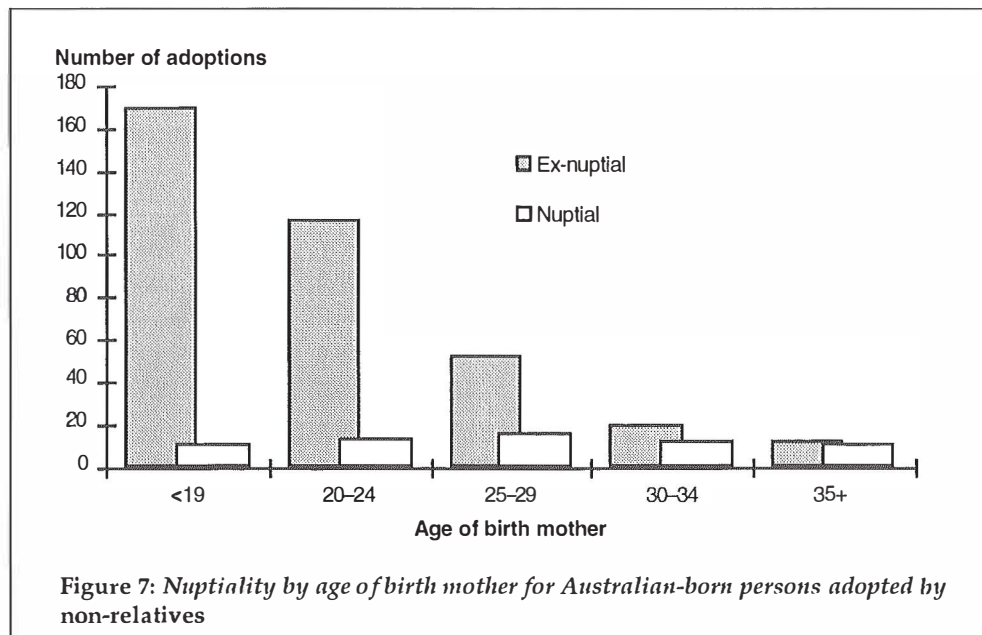
Age (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Under 1	234	155	62	26	32	28	22	10	569
1-4	63	54	27	14	18	10	-	1	187
5-9	11	20	13	11	11	1	-	-	67
10-14	3	3	7	2	6	-	1	-	22
15 and over	9	-	6	3	-	2	-	-	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>865</b>

Table 10: Australian-born persons adopted by non-relatives: age of birth mother by nuptiality and sex of adopted person, 1990-91

Age of birth mother	Nuptial			Ex-nuptial			Total		
	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P
14 years	-	-	-	3	4	7	3	4	7
15 years	-	-	-	5	5	10	5	5	10
16 years	2	-	2	15	9	24	17	9	26
17 years	-	1	1	28	12	40	28	13	41
18 years	2	1	3	22	25	47	24	26	50
19 years	4	1	5	20	22	42	24	23	47
20-24 years	9	5	14	57	60	117	66	65	131
25-29 years	8	8	16	28	24	52	36	32	68
30-34 years	4	8	12	13	7	20	17	15	32
35-39 years	9	2	11	3	5	8	12	7	19
40+ years	-	-	-	3	1	4	3	1	4
Unknown	6	2	8	18	8	26	24	10	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>(a)472</b>

M = males F = females P = persons

(a) Includes three cases where nuptiality is unknown or not stated, including one case where the child had been previously adopted or the birth mother's consent to the adoption was not required.



**Table 11: Australian-born persons adopted by non-relatives: State/Territory by nuptiality, 1990-91**

State/Territory	Nuptial	Ex-nuptial	Total
NSW	20	137	157
Vic	24	103	127
Qld	12	78	90
WA	9	25	34
SA	3	21	24
Tas	3	22	25
ACT	—	7	7
NT	1	4	5
<b>Australia</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>397</b>	<b><sup>(a)</sup>472</b>

(a) Includes three cases where nuptiality is unknown or not stated (one in New South Wales and two in the Northern Territory), including one case where the child had been previously adopted or the birth mother's consent to the adoption was not required.

Table 12: Persons adopted: number of adoptions by State/Territory, 1968–69 to 1990–91

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
1968–69	1,715	1,789	1,448	540	797	348	100	36	6,773
1969–70	2,346	2,031	1,500	703	834	243	102	61	7,820
1970–71	3,275	2,057	1,562	301	879	289	122	68	8,553
1971–72	4,539	1,768	1,774	457	776	303	127	54	9,798
1972–73	3,315	1,765	1,678	717	649	268	121	29	8,542
1973–74	1,936	1,557	1,458	783	558	268	120	25	6,705
1974–75	1,799	1,168	1,394	528	551	243	123	33	5,839
1975–76	1,449	1,032	1,112	531	549	211	87	19	4,990
1976–77	1,770	908	1,014	497	658	185	82	74	5,188
1977–78	1,068	951	660	417	506	164	55	46	3,867
1978–79	1,020	956	563	380	415	173	56	40	3,603
1979–80	853	914	450	387	475	148	85	25	3,337
1980–81	794	711	454	305	505	140	74	35	3,018
1981–82	855	753	467	261	396	119	81	39	2,971
1982–83	926	692	555	270	424	117	59	29	3,072
1983–84	698	686	517	250	438	87	51	43	2,770
1984–85	623	631	331	293	222	97	74	23	2,294
1985–86 <sup>(b)</sup>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1986–87 <sup>(b)</sup>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987–88	<sup>(a)</sup> 280	114	306	191	416	120	36	28	1,491
1988–89	<sup>(a)</sup> 335	288	353	147	221	85	47	25	1,501
1989–90	<sup>(a)</sup> 360	212	278	128	174	71	50	21	1,294
1990–91	<sup>(a)</sup> 329	258	210	136	103	61	25	20	1,142

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales from 1987–88.

(b) No data on adoptions were collated nationally for 1985–86 and 1986–87.

Source: *Adoptions Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, catalogue no. 4406.0, 1979–80 to 1984–85 and *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90

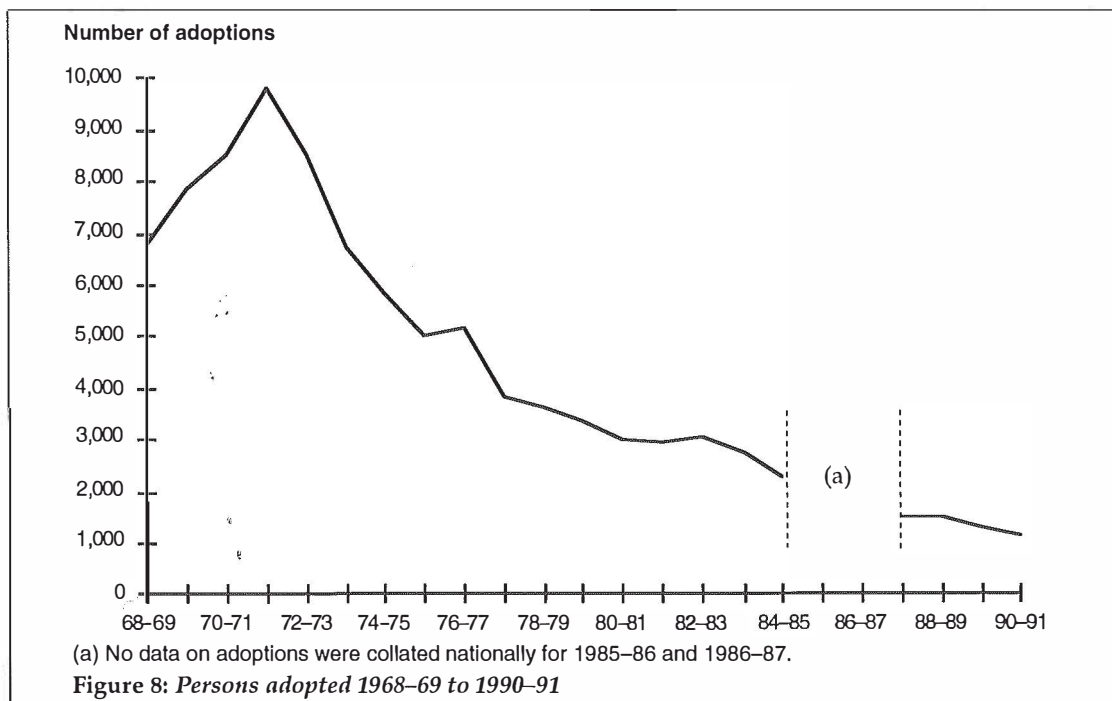


Table 13: Arranging body by State/Territory, 1979–80 to 1990–91

Year/Arranging body	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>1979–80</b>									
Government	360	130	450	307	435	117	85	25	1,909
Non-government	163	256	–	80	8	21	–	–	528
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	330	528	–	–	32	10	–	–	900
Total	853	914	450	387	475	148	85	25	3,337
<b>1980–81</b>									
Government	311	149	454	232	426	121	74	35	1,802
Non-government	139	198	–	73	23	13	–	–	446
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	344	364	–	–	56	6	–	–	770
Total	794	711	454	305	505	140	74	35	3,018
<b>1981–82</b>									
Government	321	146	467	180	335	101	81	39	1,670
Non-government	147	164	–	81	25	13	–	–	430
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	387	443	–	–	36	5	–	–	871
Total	855	753	467	261	396	119	81	39	2,971
<b>1982–83</b>									
Government	436	123	555	181	341	103	59	29	1,827
Non-government	126	189	–	89	17	14	–	–	435
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	364	380	–	–	66	–	–	–	810
Total	926	692	555	270	424	117	59	29	3,072
<b>1983–84</b>									
Government	271	120	517	150	342	73	51	43	1,567
Non-government	88	151	–	100	96	14	–	–	449
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	339	415	–	–	–	–	–	–	754
Total	698	686	517	250	438	87	51	43	2,770
<b>1984–85</b>									
Government	237	139	331	168	208	90	74	23	1,270
Non-government	114	111	–	125	12	7	–	–	369
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	272	381	–	–	2	–	–	–	655
Total	623	631	331	293	222	97	74	23	2,294
<b>1985–86 and 1986–87<sup>(b)</sup></b>									not available
<b>1987–88<sup>(c)</sup></b>									
Government	195	68	306	115	392	106	36	28	1,246
Non-government	85	46	–	74	24	14	–	–	243
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	2
Total	280	114	306	191	416	120	36	28	1,491
<b>1988–89<sup>(c)</sup></b>									
Government	240	61	353	103	211	78	47	25	1,118
Non-government	95	84	–	44	10	7	–	–	240
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	143	–	–	–	–	–	–	143
Total	335	288	353	147	221	85	47	25	1,501
<b>1989–90<sup>(c)</sup></b>									
Government	332	153	278	65	159	56	50	21	1,114
Non-government	28	59	–	–	15	15	–	–	117
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	63	–	–	–	–	63
Total	360	212	278	128	174	71	50	21	1,294
<b>1990–91<sup>(c)</sup></b>									
Government	287	199	210	81	87	46	25	20	955
Non-government	42	59	–	–	16	15	–	–	132
Other <sup>(a)</sup>	–	–	–	55	–	–	–	–	55
Total	329	258	210	136	103	61	25	20	1,142

(a) Arranged privately and legalised through solicitors.

(b) No data on adoptions were collated nationally for 1985–86 and 1986–87.

(c) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales from 1987–88.

Source: *Adoptions Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, catalogue no. 4406.0, 1979–80 to 1984–85 and *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90

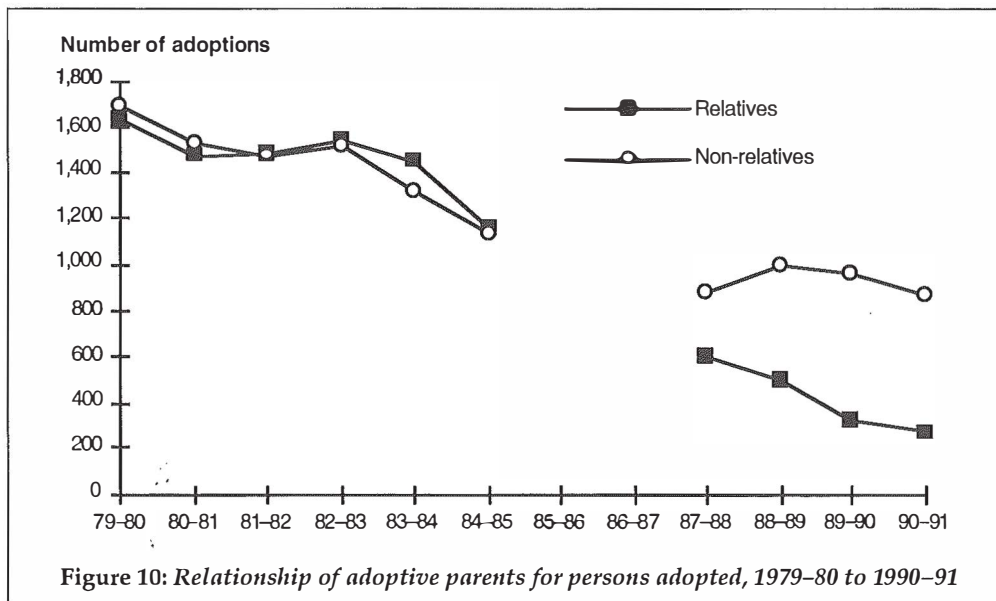
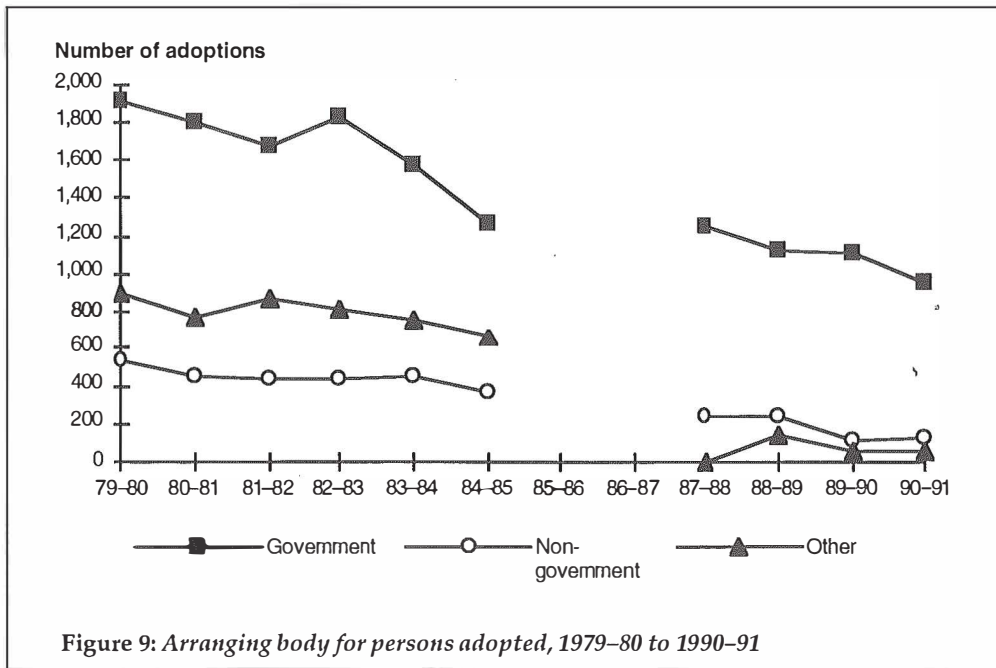


Table 14: Persons adopted: relationship to adoptive parents by State/Territory, 1979–80 to 1990–91

Year/Relationship of adoptive parents	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>1979–80</b>									
Relative	334	524	168	201	288	58	53	11	1,637
Non-relative	519	390	282	186	187	90	32	14	1,700
Total	853	914	450	387	475	148	85	25	3,337
<b>1980–81</b>									
Relative	347	379	153	167	309	65	41	23	1,484
Non-relative	447	332	301	138	196	75	33	12	1,534
Total	794	711	454	305	505	140	74	35	3,018
<b>1981–82</b>									
Relative	396	445	164	137	230	56	42	24	1,494
Non-relative	459	308	303	124	166	63	39	15	1,477
Total	855	753	467	261	396	119	81	39	2,971
<b>1982–83</b>									
Relative	384	380	257	134	297	55	24	17	1,548
Non-relative	542	312	298	136	127	62	35	12	1,524
Total	926	692	555	270	424	117	59	29	3,072
<b>1983–84</b>									
Relative	309	415	196	135	306	41	18	32	1,452
Non-relative	389	271	321	115	132	46	33	11	1,318
Total	698	686	517	250	438	87	51	43	2,770
<b>1984–85</b>									
Relative	254	375	130	162	132	51	42	11	1,157
Non-relative	369	256	201	131	90	46	32	12	1,137
Total	623	631	331	293	222	97	74	23	2,294
<b>1985–86 and 1986–87<sup>(b)</sup></b>									not available
<b>1987–88</b>									
Relative <sup>(a)</sup>	4	5	131	89	301	57	10	8	605
Non-relative	276	109	175	102	115	63	26	20	886
Total	280	114	306	191	416	120	36	28	1,491
<b>1988–89</b>									
Relative <sup>(a)</sup>	2	112	146	60	131	20	19	10	500
Non-relative	332	176	207	87	90	65	28	15	1,000
Total	<sup>(c)</sup> 335	288	353	147	221	85	47	25	1,501
<b>1989–90</b>									
Relative <sup>(a)</sup>	n.a.	27	120	81	59	22	11	7	327
Non-relative	360	185	158	47	115	49	39	14	967
Total	360	212	278	128	174	71	50	21	1,294
<b>1990–91</b>									
Relative <sup>(a)</sup>	9	26	95	80	36	20	2	9	277
Non-relative	320	232	115	56	67	41	23	11	865
Total	329	258	210	136	103	61	25	20	1,142

(a) Adoptions by parents not available for New South Wales from 1987–88.

(b) No data on adoptions were collated nationally for 1985–86 and 1986–87.

(c) Includes one adoption where relationship to adoptive parents is not known.

Source: *Adoptions Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, catalogue no. 4406.0, 1979–80 to 1984–85 and *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90



Table 15: *Persons adopted by non-relatives: birthplace by State/Territory, 1987–88 to 1990–91*

Year/ Birthplace	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>1987–88</b>									
Australia	171	109	153	65	32	29	11	8	578
Overseas	105	n.a.	22	37	83	34	15	12	<sup>(a)</sup> 308
Total	276	109	175	102	115	63	26	20	886
<b>1988–89</b>									
Australia	184	145	159	51	26	24	11	6	606
Overseas	148	31	48	36	64	41	17	9	394
Total	332	176	207	87	90	65	28	15	1,000
<b>1989–90</b>									
Australia	144	135	128	27	74	26	7	6	547
Overseas	216	50	30	20	41	23	32	8	420
Total	360	185	158	47	115	49	39	14	967
<b>1990–91</b>									
Australia	158	127	90	34	24	25	7	7	472
Overseas	162	105	25	22	43	16	16	4	393
Total	320	232	115	56	67	41	23	11	865

(a) Excludes Victoria for which data were not available.

Source: *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90

Table 16: *Persons adopted by non-relatives: birthplace 1979–80 to 1990–91*

Year	Australia	Overseas	Unknown	Total
1979–80	1094	66	540	1,700
1980–81	1388	127	19	1,534
1981–82	1311	162	4	1,477
1982–83	1336	188	–	1,524
1983–84	1108	197	13	1,318
1984–85	888	235	14	1,137
1985–86	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	<sup>(a)</sup> n.a.
1986–87	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	<sup>(a)</sup> n.a.
1987–88	578	308	–	<sup>(b)</sup> 886
1988–89	606	394	–	1,000
1989–90	547	420	–	967
1990–91	472	393	–	865

(a) No data on adoptions were collated nationally for 1985–86 and 1986–87.

(b) Excludes overseas-born adoptees for Victoria for which data were not available.

Source: *Adoptions Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, catalogue No. 4406.0, 1979–80 to 1984–85 and *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90

Table 17: Australian-born persons adopted by non-relatives: nuptiality by State/Territory, 1987-88 to 1990-91

Year/ Nuptiality	<sup>(a)</sup> NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>1987-88</b>									
Nuptial	22	8	24	8	2	1	-	-	65
Ex-nuptial	139	101	129	57	30	28	11	8	503
Total	171	109	153	65	32	29	11	8	578
<b>1988-89</b>									
Nuptial	18	7	30	8	6	3	-	1	73
Ex-nuptial	162	138	128	43	20	21	11	5	528
Total	184	145	<sup>(b)</sup> 159	51	26	24	11	6	606
<b>1989-90</b>									
Nuptial	16	6	11	7	37	2	1	-	80
Ex-nuptial	126	129	113	20	37	24	6	6	461
Total	144	135	<sup>(c)</sup> 128	27	74	26	7	6	547
<b>1990-91</b>									
Nuptial	20	24	12	9	3	3	-	1	72
Ex-nuptial	137	103	78	25	21	22	7	4	397
Total	158	127	90	34	24	25	7	<sup>(d)</sup> 7	472

(a) Includes adoptions where nuptiality was not known; ten in 1987-88, four in 1988-89, two in 1989-90 and one in 1990-91.

(b) Includes one adoption where nuptiality was not known.

(c) Includes four adoptions where nuptiality was not known.

(d) Includes two adoptions where nuptiality was not known.

Source: Adoptions, WELSTAT data collection, 1987-88 to 1989-90

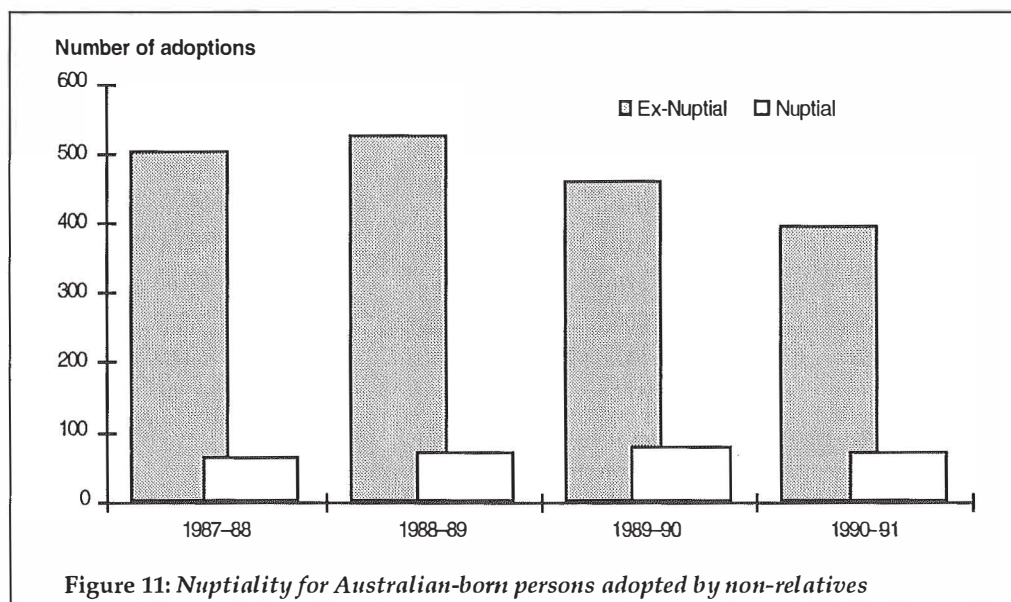


Figure 11: Nuptiality for Australian-born persons adopted by non-relatives

Table 18: Children legally available for adoption<sup>(a)</sup>: location of child by State/Territory at 30 June, 1988 to 1991

Year/Location	NSW	WA	ACT	NT
<b>At 30 June 1988</b>				
Prospective adoptive parents	123	91	23	41
Foster care	65	2	–	4
Hospital/nursing home	1	2	–	–
Other	–	3	–	1
Total	189	98	23	46
<b>At 30 June 1989</b>				
Prospective adoptive parents	115	57	26	14
Foster care	17	9	–	7
Hospital/nursing home	–	–	–	1
Other	3	–	–	–
Total	135	66	26	22
<b>At 30 June 1990</b>				
Prospective adoptive parents	103	48	22	19
Foster care	32	3	–	6
Hospital/nursing home	1	–	–	1
Other	–	–	–	–
Total	136	51	22	26
<b>At 30 June 1991</b>				
Prospective adoptive parents	49	15	5	10
Foster care	2	1	2	2
Hospital/nursing home	–	–	–	–
Other	–	1	–	1
Total	51	17	7	13

(a) See *Explanation of terms*, page 24

Source: *Adoptions*, WELSTAT data collection, 1987–88 to 1989–90

## 6 Explanation of terms

### **Adoption**

An adoption is the legal effect of an adoption order. It establishes a child or adult as if he or she were the issue of a particular person or persons. It also establishes the adopting persons as the parents of the child, as if the child had been born to them.

### **Adoption order**

An adoption order is a court administrative order made under adoption legislation. It excludes legitimisation orders made under the *Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961*.

### **Adopted person**

An adopted person is a child or adult who has been established by an adoption order as if he or she were the issue of a particular person or persons.

### **Adoptive parent**

An adoptive parent is a person who has become the parent of a child or adult as the result of an adoption order. A de facto partner of a parent may (in some States) become an adoptive parent.

### **Adult**

An adult is a person aged 18 years or more.

### **Age**

For the purpose of these statistics, the age of an adopted person is based on the date of the adoption order in completed years, or in completed calendar months where the age is less than one year. In New South Wales, age is based on the date of placement (i.e. the date on which the adopted person began living with the adoptive parents). This also applies to children adopted by non-relatives in South Australia and Tasmania. It should be noted that the date of placement could be a considerable time before the date of the adoption order.

### **Age of birth mother**

The age of the birth mother is the age, in complete years, at the date of birth of the child.

### **Child**

A child is a person aged under 18 years. Under State/Territory adoption legislation, it can include an older person for whom an adoption order is sought or has been made.

### **Child legally available for adoption by non-relatives**

A child is legally available for adoption by non-relatives if all the legally necessary consents by relatives or others to the child's adoption have been obtained or legally dispensed with. The consent of the Minister, Director, or other official of the State or Territory welfare department does not have to be obtained for the child to be available for adoption.

Children whose adoption has been deferred, or who are already living with prospective adoptive parents, are included in this category. Children brought to Australia from overseas are included only if they are legally available for adoption under Australian legislation. Orphan children under the guardianship of a State or Territory welfare department are

included only if an adoption consent was signed by at least one of the child's parents, or if active steps are being taken to find adoptive parents for the child.

## **Guardianship**

In this publication, guardianship refers to the allocation of responsibility for a child's total welfare to a couple or individual (rather than to a welfare department or other authorised department). Guardianship is not regarded as adoption, although some children under guardianship may be included in the count of children legally available for adoption.

## **Location of child**

A child legally available for adoption is classified to one of the following categories of location:

### **Living with prospective adoptive parents**

A child is living with prospective adoptive parents under the supervision of an adoption agency. The prospective parents cannot be in receipt of a foster allowance for the support of the child. Cases where a child's foster parents have applied to adopt him/her are included only if the foster parents no longer receive a foster allowance for the child.

### **Foster care**

A child is regarded as being in foster care when he or she is living in a private household apart from natural or adoptive parents and is being cared for by one or more adults approved by the welfare department. The adults are acting as substitute parents to the child and are being paid a regular allowance for the child's support by a government authority or non-government organisation.

### **Hospital/nursing home**

A child is living in a hospital or nursing home if he or she is living in an establishment mainly engaged in providing hospital (including psychiatric or mental hospital) facilities such as diagnostic medical or surgical services as well as continuous in-patient nursing care, or nursing or convalescent home facilities (including the provision of nursing or medical care as a basic part of the service).

### **Other**

This category includes all children legally available for adoption living other than with prospective adoptive parents, in foster care, or in hospitals or nursing homes. It includes children living in arrangements such as boarding schools, prisons, residential adult care establishments, with adults who are not their prospective adoptive parents or foster parents, living independently, or on unauthorised absence from their usual location.

## **Nuptiality of adopted person**

### **Nuptial**

The birth of an adopted person is classified as nuptial if the person's natural parents were legally married to each other at the time of the person's birth. Cases where the adopted person's birth father was legally married to the person's birth mother but died before the person's birth are included.

### **Ex-nuptial**

The birth of an adopted person is classified as ex-nuptial if the person's natural parents were not legally married to each other at the time of the person's birth. Cases where the adopted person's birth father was legally married to the person's birth mother but died before the person's birth are excluded.

## **Relative**

A relative is a parent or other relative as defined below.

### **Parent**

A parent is a natural (i.e. biological) parent, spouse of a natural parent or adoptive parent through a previous adoption order, or spouse of an adoptive parent. Foster parents are excluded unless they fit the definition otherwise.

### **Other relative**

An other relative is a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle, whether the relationship is of the whole blood or half-blood or by marriage, and includes relationships based on the adoption of any person, or traced through, or to, a person whose parents were not married to each other at the time of the birth or subsequently.

### **Non-relative**

A non-relative is a person who is not a parent or other relative, as defined above.

## **Arranging body**

An arranging body is an agency authorised under legislation to approve and arrange adoptions. Adoptions can be arranged by:

### **Government**

A government authority is an agency in Australia that is owned or controlled by the Commonwealth, State or Territory government, including departments and statutory authorities, State health departments, and public hospitals not run by religious institutions. This category is only used in the time series, because in earlier years some adoptions were arranged through government departments other than the welfare departments.

### **State/Territory welfare department**

A State/Territory welfare department is one of the contributing departments listed on page iii. In recent years, all adoptions arranged through government departments have been arranged through welfare departments.

### **Non-government**

A non-government agency is an agency in Australia that is not owned or controlled by the Commonwealth government or by a State, Territory or local government. Includes public hospitals run by religious institutions, private hospitals, church organisations, religious communities, registered charities, voluntary agencies, non-profit organisations, companies, and co-operative societies and associations.

Those licensed to arrange adoptions in 1990–91 were:

### **New South Wales**

Centacare Adoption Services

Anglican Adoption Agency

Barnardo's Australia

Seventh-day Adventist Adoption Agency (did not arrange any adoptions in 1990–91)

### **Victoria**

Copelen Street Family Services

Western Family Services

Gippsland Family Services

Catholic Family Welfare

Jewish Welfare Society (did not arrange any adoptions in 1990–91)

L.D.S. Social Services

**South Australia**

Australians Aiding Children Adoptions Agency

**Tasmania**

Catholic Private Adoption Agency

**Other**

Some adoptions by relatives are arranged without the involvement of an organisation, where arrangements are made between parties and the legal aspects handled through solicitors.

These adoptions refer to private, local and overseas adoptions by relatives and local adoptions by step-parents. In 1990–91, some relative adoptions were arranged in this way in New South Wales and Western Australia; data for New South Wales are not collected (see *Adoptions by relatives*, page 8).





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