



Adoptions in Australia 2018–19

Adoption is one option used to provide permanent care for children who are not able to live with their families. It is a process where full parental rights and responsibilities for a child are legally transferred from the child's parents to their adoptive parents. The purpose of adoption in Australia is to provide a nurturing, safe and permanent family for children and young people. Adoption is seen as a service for the child or young person, and decisions regarding an adoption are to be made with their best interests, both in childhood and later life, as the primary consideration.

This fact sheet presents key findings from *Adoptions Australia 2018–19*.

What are the different types of adoption?

In 2018–19, 310 adoptions were finalised in Australia. Of these, 253 (82%) were domestic adoptions of children born or permanently living in Australia.

The 2 main types of domestic adoption of Australian children are:

- **known child adoptions**—where the child and adoptive parents know each other before adoption. This includes adoptions by step-parents, other relatives and carers.
- **local adoptions**—where the child and adoptive parents do not know each other.

Australian adoptive parents can also adopt children from overseas (intercountry adoption). Intercountry adoption includes adoptions from countries with which Australia has an official adoption program. The child and adoptive parents generally have no contact or relationship prior to the adoption process.

Adoptions of children from other countries by relatives or other known carers—called known child intercountry adoptions—are not included in national adoptions data and the *Adoptions Australia* reports.

Quick facts

Of the **310** adoptions in 2018–19:

68% (211) were **known child adoptions**

14% (42) were **local**

18% (57) were **intercountry**.

Who was adopted?

54% (166) of children were male

46% (144) were female

12 were Indigenous

67 were adopted a part of **28** sibling groups



How old were the children?

7.4% (23) were aged under 12 months

29% (91) were 1 to 4

25% (78) were 5 to 9

28% (86) were 10 to 17

10% (32) were over 18

Who adopted the children?

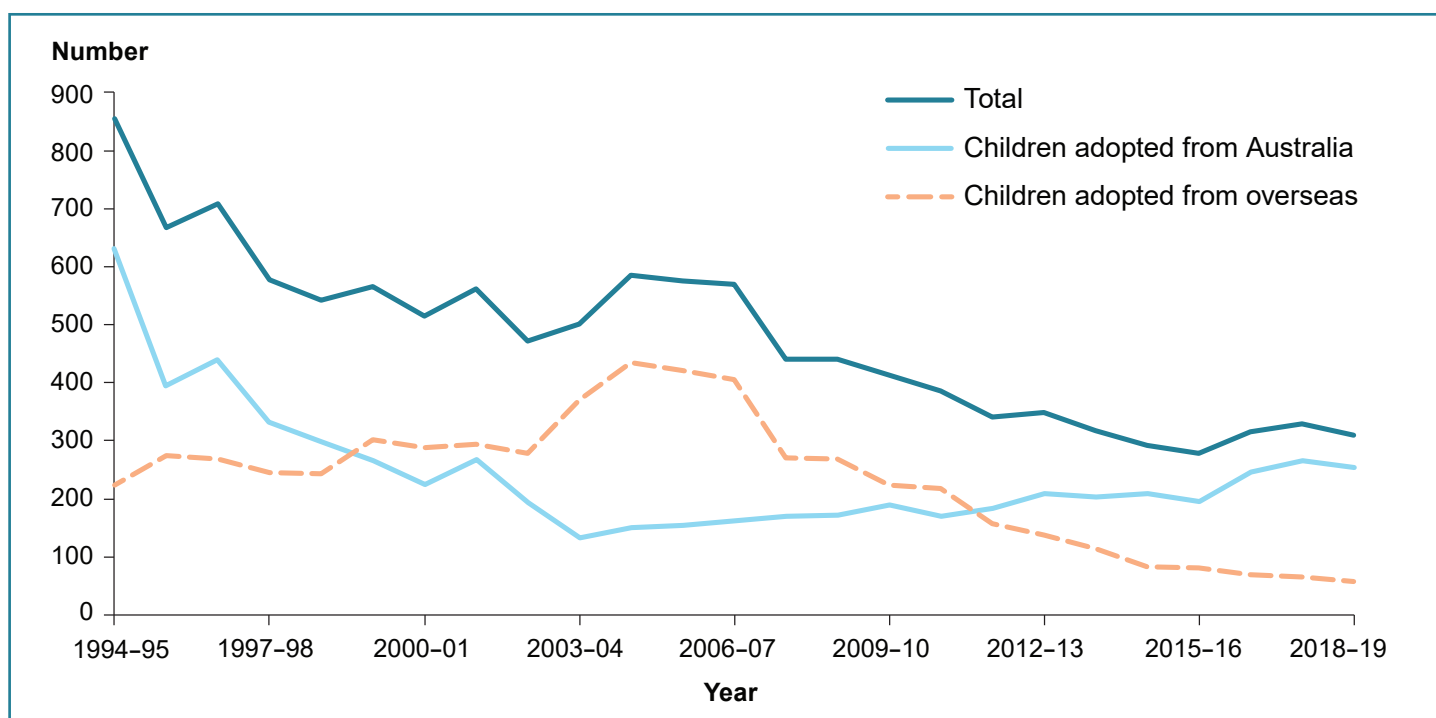
- Not including domestic adoptions by step-parents and other relatives, **190** children were adopted by married couples, **26** by de facto couples and **25** by single parents.
- Most adoptive parents (**72%**) were aged 40 or over, with 1 in 4 aged 40–44 (23%).
- Excluding adoptions from New South Wales for which data were not available, half of the adoptive families (**50%**) had no other children, **21%** had only other adopted children, and **28%** had either other biological children or both other biological and adopted children.

How have adoptions changed over time

Over the past 25 years, the overall number of adoptions has fallen dramatically. In 1994–95, 855 adoptions were finalised. By 2015–16, the number had fallen by 64% to 278. More recently, adoptions have begun to increase slightly, with a rise of 12% from 2015–16 to 2018–19. These long-term trends are due to factors such as:

- changing views in Australian society on the circumstances in which adoption and parenthood are considered appropriate
- changes in intercountry adoption programs and the capacity of overseas countries to provide domestic care for children unable to live with their parents.

The increase between 2015–16 and 2018–19 is due to a 40% increase in known child adoptions, from 151 in 2015–16 to 211 in 2018–19. The increase can be attributed to a policy change in New South Wales that has resulted in a higher number of adoptions by known carers, such as foster parents.



How many Indigenous children are adopted?

All states and territories have adopted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The placement principle outlines a preference for placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with Indigenous Australians if they need to be placed outside their family, as long as it is in the best interest of the child.

Between 1994–95 and 2018–19, 126 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were adopted. Half were adopted through known child adoptions and were generally not able to be adopted by anyone other than the adoptive parent(s). The other 63 Indigenous children were adopted through a local adoption, and more than half of these children (56%, or 35) were adopted by Indigenous Australians.

Who organises adoptions?

State and territory government authorities are responsible for adoption legislation and manage adoption applications and assess the eligibility and suitability of those seeking to adopt children. In some instances authority for the placement of a child may be delegated to an authorised non-government organisation. The Australian Government Department of Social Services manages Australia's intercountry adoption programs.

More information: This fact sheet is part of the *Adoptions Australia 2018–19* release, which includes the full report, 3 other fact sheets, data visualisations, and supplementary tables. All material can be downloaded for free at <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/adoptions/overview>>.