



Local adoptions in 2019–20

What are local adoptions?

Local adoptions are adoptions of children born or permanently living in Australia who are legally able to be placed for adoption, but generally have had no contact or relationship with the adoptive parent(s).

Each state and territory has legislation governing local adoption practices. In most cases, the state or territory departments will be the guardian of the child until the adoption order is made, consents for adoption are revoked, or a specified event occurs (such as when a relative is able to care for the child). In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, states and territories have additional legislation or regulations that help determine whether an adoption should be considered over other arrangements.

How have local adoptions changed over time?

With some fluctuations, the number of local adoptions has gradually fallen from 85 in 2000–01 to 48 in 2019–20. These long-term trends are due to factors such as:

- changing views and social trends in Australian society including falling fertility rates, the wider availability of effective birth control, increased support for single parents, and the emergence of family planning centres
- legislative changes introduced by state and territory departments over the past 25 years supporting a greater use of alternative legal orders (such as permanent care orders) that transfer sole parental responsibility for a child to a person other than the parent (in most cases, to relatives or carers with whom the child is living).

Quick facts

There were **48** local adoptions (**14%** of total adoptions) in Australia in 2019–20.

Of these children:

58% (28) were male

42% (20) were female

67% (32) were aged under 12 months

31% (15) were aged 1 to 4

3 were Indigenous Australians.

Who adopted the children?

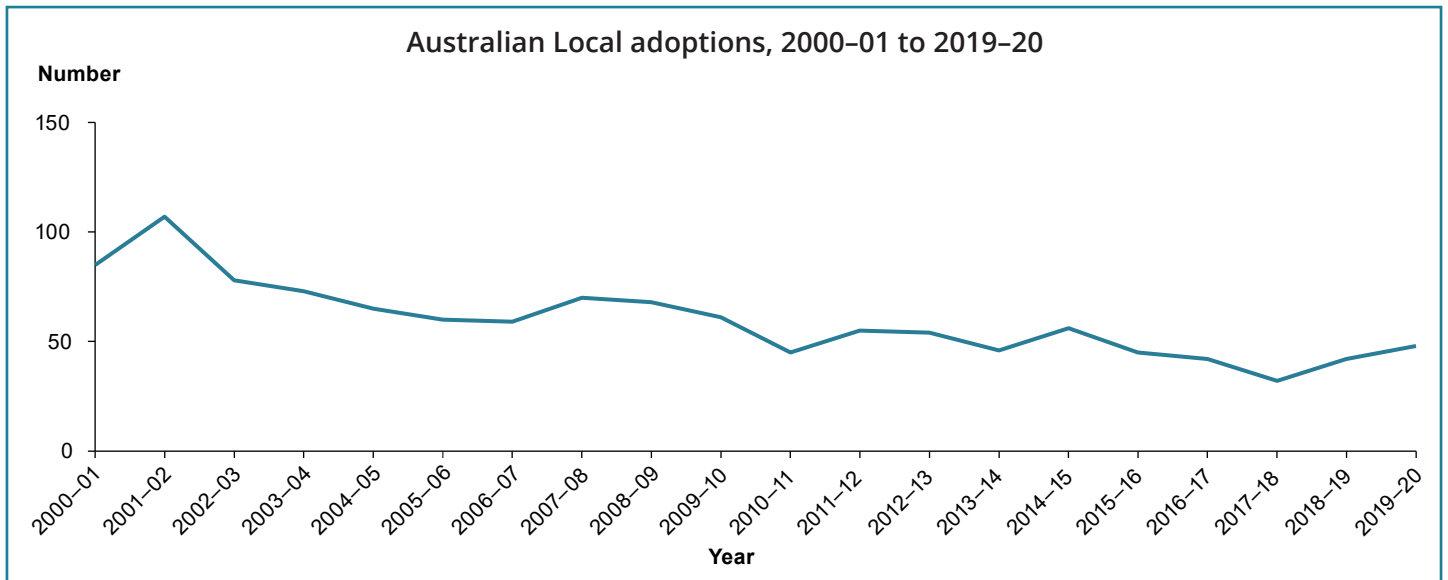
- Of the 48 local adoptions, **45** children were adopted by married couples and **3** by de facto couples.



- **44%** of local adoptive parents were aged 40 and over at the time of placement.
- Excluding adoptions from New South Wales for which data were not available, **74%** of the adoptive families had no other children, **14%** had only other adopted children, and **9%** had only other biological children.

Contact between families

9 in 10 (92%) local adoptions were 'open', with all parties agreeing to some form of contact or information exchange between families.



How were local adoptions arranged in 2019–20?

Legislation governing local adoption in states and territories requires that, in most instances, consent for adoption be received from both parents. Dispensation of consent is usually provided by the relevant court in each state or territory only when the parent(s) are unable to give consent themselves. For local adoptions in 2019–20:

- both parents provided consent in 40% of cases
- the father’s consent was dispensed with or not required in 56% of cases
- both parents consent was dispensed with or not required in 4% of cases.

Most (75%) local adoptions finalised in 2019–20 were arranged by a relevant state or territory government department. The rest (25%) were organised by a non-government organisation.

How many Indigenous children were adopted locally?

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child 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.

- Since 1995–96, 43% (54) of all Indigenous adoptees were adopted through local adoptions—including 3 Indigenous children adopted through local adoption in 2019–20.
- More than half (56%) of local adoptions of Indigenous children over this period involved at least one adoptive parent who identified as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

More information

This fact sheet is part of the *Adoptions Australia 2019–20* release, which includes the full report, 3 other fact sheets and supplementary tables. All material can be downloaded for free from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/adoptions/overview>.