

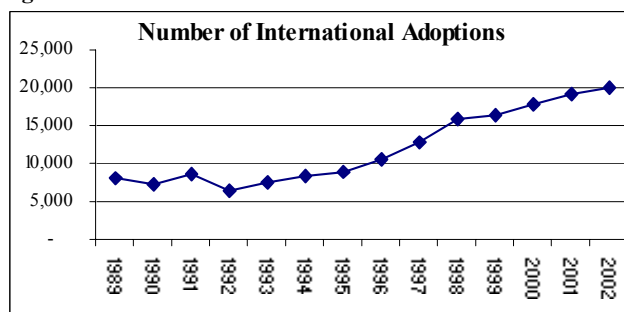
## International Adoption: Trends and Issues

### Number of International Adoptions

An estimated 100 million children with no available caregivers live in Asia (65 million), Africa (34 million), and Latin America and the Caribbean (8 million). This figure is an undercount of all children with no caregivers worldwide, as it does not include Europe, a region from which there are many international adoptions to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Children are without caregivers for a variety of reasons, including the death of both parents, abandonment, or extreme poverty.

Between 1989 and 2002, 167,420 children were adopted in the U.S. from nations other than the U.S. In 2001 alone, there were 19,237 intercountry adoptions in the U.S. while 50,000 were adopted from the public child welfare system. Very little is known about the number of private adoptions that occur annually in the U.S. as there are no reporting requirements.<sup>2,3</sup> Figure 1 shows a 248% increase in the number of international adoptions over the past 14 years.

**Figure 1**



As a country's policy changes, so do the number of children adopted. For example, in June 2001, the Romanian government issued a moratorium on international adoptions while the country revised its adoption procedures. This moratorium remains in place until new legislation is in effect.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, there was a decrease in the number of adoptions from Romania from 782 to 168 adoption between 2001 and 2002.<sup>5</sup> In the Ukraine, there is a ban on adoptive parents gathering information on the prospective child before completing an application and travelling to the Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> As a result, between 2001 and 2002, there was an 11% decrease in the number of adoptions from the Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

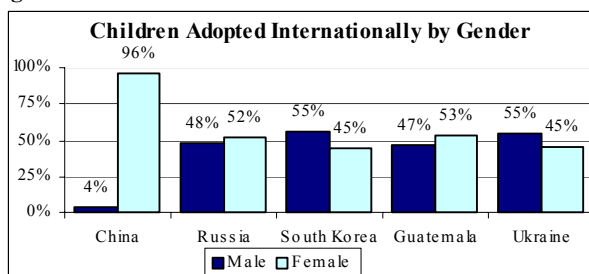
**Table 1**

Region	2001	2002	% Change
China	4,681	5,053	7.9%
Guatemala	1,609	2,219	37.9%
Ukraine	1,246	1,106	-11.2%
India	543	466	-14.2%
Colombia	407	334	-17.9%
Romania	782	168	-78.5%

### Gender Matters

In 2001, 50% of the children adopted from the U.S. public child welfare system were girls; while 63% of the children adopted internationally were girls. Upon further examination, the disparity in the genders of children adopted internationally occurs primarily with one nation, Mainland China. In 2001, 4,649 children were adopted from China of which 96% were girls. For the remaining nations of origin, the gender disparity is nonexistent.<sup>8,9</sup>

**Figure 2**

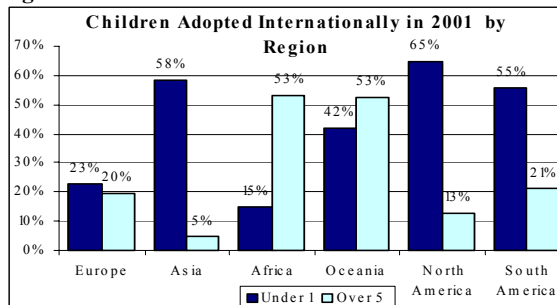


The gender disparity may be due to China's population control policy. The one child policy, which is not a formal policy, advocates delayed marriage and delayed child bearing, fewer and healthier births, and one child per couple.<sup>10</sup> In a study of abandoned infants in China, gender was a critical determinant of the characteristic of children abandoned. Birth order and gender composition of siblings were also important. The research showed that if the female was an only child, she was less likely to be abandoned. Over the past thirty years, possibly as a result of China's population control, the number of females adopted within China as well to outside of China has increased.<sup>11</sup>

### Age Matters

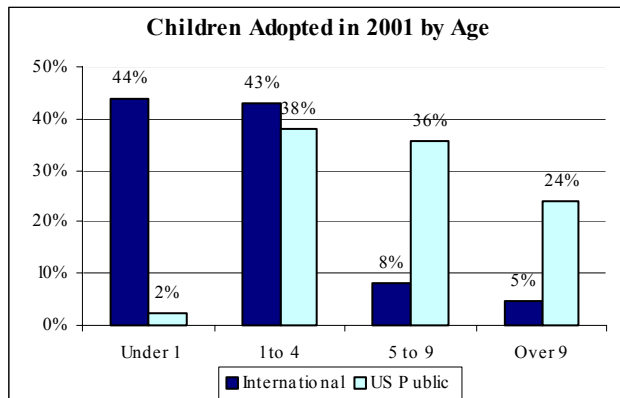
The age of the child adopted also varies based on whether the child is adopted from a foreign country or from the public child welfare system. In 2001, 2% of the children adopted from the public child welfare system were under the age of one; while 44% of the children adopted from other nations were under a year old. Children are generally adopted at an older age from the public child welfare system. In 2001, 24% of the children adopted from the public child welfare system were over the age of 9; and 5% of children adopted internationally were over 9 years old.<sup>12,13</sup>

**Figure 3**



There are also regional differences in the ages of adopted children. Children are adopted at younger ages from Asia, North America, and South America. They are adopted at older ages from Europe, Africa, and South America.

Figure 4



There are also interesting patterns among individual nations within the same region. For example, while 44% of all international adoptions are of children under one year of age, 96% of all children adopted from Korea and 75% of all children from Vietnam were under the age of one.<sup>14</sup>

**Protecting the Interests of the Children**

There has been concern regarding the illegal trafficking of children worldwide. These children may or may not have family that can care for them. In 1993, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, a multi-lateral treaty, was passed. The purpose of the Hague Convention is to protect children, birth parents, and adoptive parents; and to prevent child trafficking.

Sixty-six nations approved the treaty, and by May 2002, 46 countries had ratified it. In Summer 2000, the Senate voted to ratify the Convention. Several months later, in October 2000, the U.S. passed the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA). Once the IAA is fully implemented, the Convention will be ratified.<sup>15</sup>

The Convention requires a Central Authority in each country that ratifies it. The Central Authority will enforce laws relevant to adoption. Through the IAA, the State Department serves as the Central Authority. Through the U.S. Central Authority, there will be a database containing information on children adopted from other nations and their adoptive parents. In addition, post-placement services will be promoted.

The Convention and the IAA provide protections for children. The IAA requires that adoptive parents receive counseling before and after the adoption process. The Department of State now accredits adoption agencies. Neither regulation requires prospective adopted children to be orphans. Rather, the IAA provides an expanded definition of orphan. If a child has parents, they must be incapable of providing proper care and their relationship to their child must be terminated. Furthermore, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) must determine that the purpose of the adoption is for a parent-child relationship.<sup>16</sup>

Over the past 30 years, over 250,000 children have been adopted from foreign countries. Little is known about the children prior to their arrival in the U.S.; and limited research is available on the parents who adopted them and the long-term outcomes of the adoption. The International community, by developing the Convention, has begun to take responsibility for these children. Once the IAA is in full effect and data collection begins, there will be more comprehensive data available on children adopted into the U.S. and the families that adopt them, as well as the long-term outcome of the adoptions.

Prepared by Noel Kinder, MA, Program Manager, [nkinder@cwla.org](mailto:nkinder@cwla.org).

<sup>1</sup> USAID, UNICEF, and UNAIDS. (July 2002). Children on the Brink 2002: A Joint Report on Orphan Estimates and Program Strategies. Washington, DC: TvT Associates. Available online at [http://www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNACP860.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACP860.pdf).  
<sup>2</sup> United States Department of State. Immigrant VISAS Issued to Orphans Coming to the U.S. Top Countries of Origin. Available online at [http://travel.state.gov/orphan\\_numbers.html](http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html).  
<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2001 Estimates as of March 2003 (8). Available online at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report8.htm>.  
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Overseas Citizens Services Office of Children Issues. (June 2003). Update on Romanian Moratorium on International Adoption. Available online at [http://travel.state.gov/adoption\\_romania.html](http://travel.state.gov/adoption_romania.html).  
<sup>5</sup> United States Department of State. Immigrant VISAS Issued to Orphans Coming to the U.S. Top Countries of Origin. Available online at [http://travel.state.gov/orphan\\_numbers.html](http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html).  
<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Overseas Citizens Services Office of Children Issues. (March 2003). International Adoption - Ukraine. Available online at [http://travel.state.gov/adoption\\_ukraine.html](http://travel.state.gov/adoption_ukraine.html).  
<sup>7</sup> United States Department of State. Immigrant VISAS Issued to Orphans Coming to the U.S. Top Countries of Origin. Available online at [http://travel.state.gov/orphan\\_numbers.html](http://travel.state.gov/orphan_numbers.html).  
<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2001 Estimates as of March 2003 (8). Available online at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report8.htm>.  
<sup>9</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service. (2001). Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Table 15. Immigrant-Orphans Adopted by U.S. Citizens By Sex, Age, and Region and Country of Birth, Fiscal Year 2001. Available online at <http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/IMM01yrbk/ExcIMM01/Table15.xls>.  
<sup>10</sup> Zink, J. China's One Child Policy. Available online at <http://axe.acadiau.ca/~043638z/one-child/policy.html>.  
<sup>11</sup> Population Council. (November 6, 1998). Infant Abandonment and Adoption in China. Available online at [http://www.popcouncil.org/mediacenter/newsreleases/pdr24\\_3\\_china.html](http://www.popcouncil.org/mediacenter/newsreleases/pdr24_3_china.html).  
<sup>12</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service. (2001). Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Table 15. Immigrant-Orphans Adopted by U.S. Citizens By Sex, Age, and Region and Country of Birth, Fiscal Year 2001. Available online at <http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/IMM01yrbk/ExcIMM01/Table15.xls>.  
<sup>13</sup> Special data tabulation of 2001 Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) prepared by the Child Welfare League of America, National Data Analysis System.  
<sup>14</sup> Immigration and Naturalization Service. (2001). Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Table 15. Immigrant-Orphans Adopted by U.S. Citizens By Sex, Age, and Region and Country of Birth, Fiscal Year 2001. Available online at <http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/IMM01yrbk/ExcIMM01/Table15.xls>.  
<sup>15</sup> United States Department of State. Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. Available online at <http://travel.state.gov/hagueinfo2002.html>.  
<sup>16</sup> Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. Hague Convention on International Adoption. Available online at <http://www.bcis.gov/graphics/services/HagueConvention.pdf>.