



National Council For Adoption

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New Domestic Adoption Study Leads Discussion on Current State of Adoption

February 15, 2017—Alexandria, VA—National Council For Adoption (NCFA) announces the publication of the seventh edition of the National Adoption Data study. *Adoption: By the Numbers* is the only comprehensive source of the most recent domestic adoption statistics for American families. Featuring data collected and analyzed by Drs. Jo Jones and Paul Placek, this publication explores trends in domestic infant adoption, intercountry adoption, and adoption through foster care. The publication is now available for viewing at www.adoptioncouncil.org/by-the-numbers.

NCFA first published the National Adoption Data study as an article within our 1985 *Adoption Factbook*. This study has been conducted approximately every five years since then, and was last published in *Adoption Factbook V*, the fifth of a nationally acclaimed research volume on adoption released in 2011. NCFA has decided to cease regular publication of the *Adoption Factbook*. Instead, this year, we are publishing *Adoption: By the Numbers* in a special edition of our monthly policy publication, the *Adoption Advocate*. Over the past eight years, NCFA's *Adoption Advocate* has been widely and increasingly circulated to professionals, families, press, and anyone with an interest in adoption policy and practice. Like the *Adoption Factbook*, it has become a nationally recognized source for adoption-specific research and commentary across all adoption types, with several editions being translated and distributed internationally. The *Adoption Advocate* can be found at www.adoptioncouncil.org/resources/adoption-advocate.

NCFA is dedicated to principled advocacy on behalf of children, birth parents, and adoptive families. Commissioning thorough and up-to-date research is one key component of this important work, as it helps adoption advocates develop, share, and promote best practices in adoption. Dr. Jo Jones served as lead researcher on *Adoption: By the Numbers*, and had the benefit of the support and counsel of Dr. Paul Placek, who had served as both lead researcher and author in all of the previous “By the Numbers” reports. Although commissioned by NCFA, Drs. Jones and Placek worked independently of NCFA, and their findings, analysis, and conclusions are their own.

Since 2007—the year NCFA last counted the number of adoptions by Americans—the number of overall adoptions has fallen, even as the total number of domestic infant adoptions has seen a small increase. (Most of the decline in the total number of adoptions can be attributed to a 75 percent decline in the number of international adoptions.)

“Having worked in the field of adoption for over 30 years, I’ve seen how much adoption has improved as a professional human service for children in need of families in the U.S. and around the world. However, adoption is increasingly underutilized as an option for children—and as a child welfare advocate, this concerns me greatly given how much research and the real-life experiences of millions of adoptive families validate that adoption accomplishes the best interests of children. The good news is that hundreds of thousands of American parents are willing to open their homes and hearts to children in need of a family,

and it is on that premise that NCFA will work to ensure that the viable option of adoption is recognized as a positive outcome for children in the U.S. and around the world who need a loving family,” says NCFA president and CEO Chuck Johnson.

Following are sample highlights from the latest National Adoption Data study.

Total Adoptions

The total number of all adoptions taking place in the U.S. has fallen, from a count of 133,737 adoptions in 2007 to 110,373 (41,023 related adoptions and 69,350 unrelated adoptions) in 2014. The drop in the number of intercountry adoptions can account for more than half of this decline, while there has also been a decline in the number of related adoptions.

Domestic Infant Adoptions

The number of domestic infant adoptions has remained mostly steady from 2007; there was even a small increase from 18,078 in 2007 to 18,329 in 2014. Although the number of domestic adoptions represents only 0.5% of all live births and only 1.1% of births to single parents, researchers saw no decrease in the number of infant adoptions since the last count, after noting a decrease in every other National Adoption Data report since 1992.

NCFA does not necessarily seek to see an increase or decrease in the number of infant adoptions, but we continue to hear from professionals and those who have faced unplanned pregnancies that information received about adoption is too often biased, late, or incomplete. We believe that everyone facing an unplanned pregnancy should have access to information that helps them make their own fully informed decision about adoption. NCFA is also committed to helping ensure that women (and their partners) have timely, accurate, and non-coercive information about adoption so they may make their own decisions whether to pursue an adoption plan or not.

Intercountry Adoptions

Since 2004, the number of intercountry adoptions has fallen steadily to a low of 5,647 in 2015. The 2015 number is similar to the numbers in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The significant decline in intercountry adoptions is of particular concern to NCFA because the number of orphaned, abandoned, and relinquished children worldwide has increased by many millions. Thousands of Americans still express a desire to adopt internationally, but are often hindered from pursuing intercountry adoption due to a variety of obstacles, many of which could be overcome if the international child welfare community would work better together on behalf of vulnerable children. Although the policies of other nations play a role, we also believe that the decline is, at least in part, due to the U.S. Government’s lukewarm support of intercountry adoption.

NCFA is committed to remaining a prominent, proactive, and effective voice for all children all over the world in need of families. We will continue to call the U.S. Government and the international child welfare community to account, and encourage them to work to better ensure that intercountry adoption remains a viable solution for those children who will likely not see their right to a family fulfilled in their country of birth.

Adoptions from Foster Care

While the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) has since reported that foster care adoptions increased to a five-year high in Federal Fiscal Year 2015, the data collected in *Adoption: By the Numbers* only explores up to FFY 2014. Within those years, adoptions from foster care had held steady at approximately 50,000. It is also important to note that the number of children waiting to be adopted from foster care and the number of children entering foster care have both increased steadily. There is no better example of the positive role that legislative advocacy can have than Congress passing the

NCFA-endorsed Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which in a very short period of time resulted in doubling the number of children being adopted from foster care within only a few years of its passage.

Children are denied their basic need and human right to a permanent family to care for them when they are left languishing in foster care. Reform is desperately needed. In response to the specific problems facing the foster care system NCFA has begun a longitudinal and comprehensive research project that will lead to national best-practice recommendations for the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents.

(For the complete findings and in-depth analysis of the National Adoption Data Study, please see the full-length article on our website at www.adoptioncouncil.org/by-the-numbers)

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National Council For Adoption is a non-profit, non-sectarian, non-partisan adoption advocacy organization whose mission is to meet the diverse needs of children, birth parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and all those touched by adoption through global advocacy, education, research, legislative action, and collaboration. Our vision is a world in which every child *everywhere* has a nurturing, permanent family. Our exclusive focus on adoption includes supporting and encouraging safe and ethical U.S. domestic and intercountry adoptions, adoptions of children from the U.S. foster care system and domestic adoption options in countries around the world.

More information is available on our website, adoptioncouncil.org.